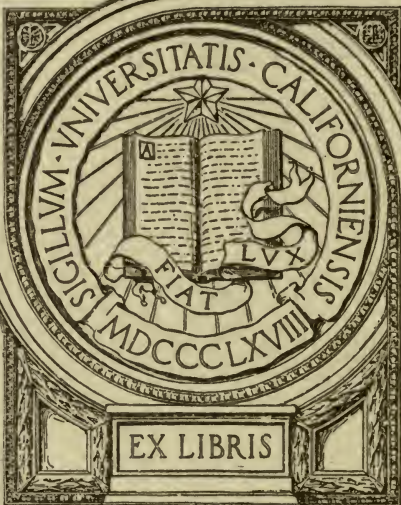


**The Merchant of
Mount Vernon**

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THE MERCHANT OF MOUNT VERNON

By
John Leonard Smith

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Class of 1900

TO THE
ALUMNUS

Preface

The main object of this book is to reunite a mother and daughter, if the mother is still living.

The mother left a home of luxury in England to share her lot with a poor Englishman. The marriage was bitterly opposed by the parents of the lady, who cast her off, and together the pair came to Toronto, Canada, and a short time later a baby girl was born.

The young husband went on the road as a commercial traveler, and was killed in a railway wreck. The mother, reared in the lap of luxury, was unable to care for herself and babe, and left her at the home of a wealthy lady, who had given her employment on several occasions.

She never returned for the babe, and her fate is unknown.

Full information concerning names, dates, watch and locket may be obtained by applying to the author,

JOHN LEONARD SMITH.

Los Angeles, California.

THE MERCHANT OF MT. VERNON.

CHAPTER I.

Off for the War

James Vernon was the leading merchant and president of the Savings Bank of Mt. Vernon, Michigan. At the time the principal events of this tale began to take place it was the chief lumber center of the lower peninsula, and had a population of about six thousand and five hundred souls. The supplies of all the lumber camps in the central part of the State were purchased there, and it bore the reputation of being the most important lumber and commercial city of its size in the lower peninsula.

Mr. Vernon was a shrewd, far-seeing man, who went there when the place was a forest, and by dint of hard work and perseverance had changed the place from a wilderness of trees to a bustling little city, with noisy mill wheels and screaming steam whistles.

The city is situated on the banks of the Chippewa River, about seventy-five miles west of Saginaw Bay.

The river at this point forms over a mile of rapids, and Mr. Vernon's practical eye saw the excellent opportunities to use the water power for manufacturing purposes in the future, and, with this end in view, purchased six hundred and eighty acres of land bordering on the river front, which afterward became the site of Mt. Vernon.

It is here quite appropriate to give the reader a short history of James Vernon's early life. Born in Culpepper, Virginia, in 1843, he was a descendant of one of the oldest and proudest families of that grand old State noted for its beautiful women and chivalrous men.

His father used to point with pride to the records of his illustrious ancestors and their deeds of heroism in the Revolutionary War under the leadership of that glorious man, General Washington. But he was destined to have the counsel of that noble Christian father but a short time. His birth was the cause of his mother's death, and his father followed her when James was but a child, scarcely twelve years of age.

Upon the death of his father, James was left under the guardianship of his uncle, Thomas Mansfield, who was his mother's younger brother.

The uncle proved false to his trust; the fine old plantation which had been the home of his ancestors since the Declaration of Independence, was heavily mortgaged; the funds in the bank dwindled down to a mere pittance, and the best of the stock was disposed of in various ways while James was attending a northern college.

It was here that James first began to learn the ways of the world, and many things which had transpired in the past had seemed all right and proper at the time, but now assumed an entirely different aspect, and a vague suspicion of wrongdoing entered his mind for the first time.

Old Colonel Green, whose plantation adjoined that of the Vernons, had been his father's closest friend, and upon the death of the latter he filled the place of father toward the orphan boy as near as he could, and it would have been much better had he been appointed James' guardian instead of his uncle Thomas.

It was to this kind friend that James now turned for counsel and assistance, and accordingly wrote him a long letter, telling him of his suspicions.

The Colonel was a fiery, hot-tempered old fellow, very pronounced in his likes and dislikes, and always spoke his mind wherever he happened to be, utterly regardless of whom he might offend, and as a result he had several times got into trouble in his younger days. But he was a famous athlete,

an expert swordsman and a dead shot; consequently the other man in each case had got the worst of the argument.

He had long had his doubts of the good intentions of Mr. Mansfield toward the orphan boy, and, with the characteristic bluntness of his nature, had accused him of bad faith.

This, as a matter of course, caused a breach in their friendship, and they had never spoken to each other since.

On receiving the young collegian's letter the peppery old Colonel went straight over to see Mr. Mansfield, but, on reaching the home of that gentleman, a darkey informed him that the master was away on business, and would not be back for several months. Bottling up his wrath, he fairly tore back home, vowing that he would have an explanation from the rascally uncle the moment he set foot in the neighborhood, and some pretty lively times were promised sleepy old Culpepper when Mr. Mansfield returned.

When it became noised around the neighborhood that trouble was brewing between the Colonel and Mr. Mansfield, it was freely hinted by the wiseacres that Mr. Mansfield was afraid and cleared out.

The affection of the Colonel for James was well known, and it was the general impression of everyone that the latter would some day marry Colonel Green's beautiful granddaughter, Jessie Hamilton.

The two had been sweethearts from childhood, and it was the dearest wish of Colonel Green's heart that they should be united in marriage.

The Colonel was never known to yield a particle to anyone when they crossed his will, and when his only daughter married Joseph Hamilton against his most express wishes, he never forgave her or saw her face in life again.

The young couple went north to live, and both were killed in a railway wreck in Boston while returning home from a musical entertainment.

They had been married two years when the accident occurred, and they left a little blue-eyed baby girl behind.

The stubborn old Colonel, upon hearing of the fatal accident, hastened to Boston at once, gave the couple a splendid burial, and took the orphan girl home.

All the pent-up affection of the old man's heart was lavished on the child of the daughter who had dared to disobey him. Nothing was too good for her. He named her Jessie, and she grew up as beautiful as a dream both in mind and in body. The best tutors of the day were obtained for her education, the Colonel refusing to send her to an institution of learning because he would not be parted from her.

He forbade his meek little wife ever mentioning their daughter's name in his presence, and whether or not he was sorry because he had treated her so harshly was a secret known only to himself and his Maker.

The old man's affection was returned by the child, and she was the only one who could do anything with him when he was angry, which, by the way, was generally rather often.

She never crossed his wish in any way, and when he would have an outburst of anger, she would throw her soft, white arms about his neck and whisper words in his ear that were as oil upon the troubled waters of the sea.

When James and Jessie announced their engagement it was the happiest moment of Colonel Green's life. The old southern mansion was thrown open for a grand ball, and all the neighborhood was invited. Before the ball was over, the Colonel was gloriously intoxicated, and his meek little wife was obliged to put him to bed.

James left for college a week after the ball, with the sweet remembrance of his sweetheart's kisses on his lips and her vows of undying love ringing in his ears.

It was the second year of his college career when the terrible news of the secession of the Southern States was flashed throughout the world.

James' stay in the North and his learning at college served to give him an insight into the future, and he saw the terrible results should the seceding States come out victorious.

There was a long, hard struggle in his breast, and he was torn by conflicting emotions. The love for his native State, his grand old southern home, his sweetheart and the friends of his youth appealed to him on one side, and on the other side, what he considered duty.

He knew the hot-headed old Colonel would never forgive him should he take up arms in behalf of the North, for immediately on learning of the forthcoming struggle, he wrote the young collegian, bidding him come home at once and take up arms in defense of the South.

It was with a heavy heart that James turned homeward, for he had made up his mind to don the uniform of the blue, cost him what it may.

That the interview with the Colonel would be a stormy one he knew full well, but what would the little girl, whom he had not seen for the past year, say? Would she receive him with open arms when he told her he was about to don the uniform of the blue and fight against his native State, the friends of his childhood, but, worst of all, against her grandfather, the stubborn old man who never gave in to any one, and when Colonel Green should learn of his determination to fight for the North, might he not forbid him to ever see or speak to Jessie again?

Upon arriving at Culpepper he made his way to the only hotel the place boasted of, and changed his travel-stained garments for others more suitable for the climate.

The Colonel's home lay between his home and Culpepper, and, not wishing Colonel Green to see him until after he had held an interview with Jessie, he waited until after dark before starting for home.

He just reached the familiar driveway in front of his grand old-fashioned southern home, when he chanced to look down the road and saw a horse and carriage rapidly approaching.

A peal of silvery laughter that sent the blood tingling through his veins told him who at least one of the occupants of the carriage was long before he was able to distinguish

a mere outline of their forms. Stepping out to the roadside, he waited, hat in hand, until they were nearly abreast of him, and then he hailed them with a hearty "good evening, ladies and gentlemen."

A low, glad cry was the answer of Jessie, while the occupants of the buggy, who proved to be the Fredericks boys and their sister, greeted him with genuine affection.

Jessie had been their guest for the past week, and they were driving her home when they chanced to meet James in the road.

A few words of explanation served to make each acquainted with the facts of their meeting, and, after a few minutes' conversation relating chiefly to James' absence in the North and the terrible news of the impending war, they drove away.

The Fredericks boys had been loud in their denunciation of the president and the northern people in general, so much so that neither noticed the silence of James.

Jessie, who knew every trait of his straightforward character, guessed the reason at once, and it was with a feeling of relief that she saw her friends depart for home.

She had alighted from the buggy as soon as it came to a standstill, saying she would walk the remaining short distance home with James.

Side by side they stood, watching the carriage disappearing in the distance, and when the last outline faded from sight in the dusk he strained her to his breast, saying, "Jessie, I have something of the gravest importance to say to you to-night; something that may part our ways in life forever." For answer she threw her white arms about his neck, crying, "Nothing can ever part us—nothing."

"Not even if I were to tell you that I am to become what the people down here will call a traitor, aye, what even your grandfather will term me?"

"You could never be a traitor in my eyes," she said. "Your noble, generous nature could never stoop to that. What you

are about to tell me I have already guessed, even before I alighted from the buggy this evening."

"You did?" he said, wonderingly. "How?"

"By the expression on your face as well as by your actions," she said; but as an afterthought she added, "they did not notice anything denoting your thoughts to be otherwise than their own."

"But how did you notice it?" he persisted.

"O, I know you better than you know yourself," she said. Then, in a graver voice, she added, "I know that you have decided to fight for the North because you believe it is your duty to do so."

"And you will not hate me for so doing?" he cried, eagerly. "You will not believe as the rest are bound to believe, that I am a traitor to my native State and my principles?"

"Never," she cried, looking lovingly at her strong, handsome young lover, who hung on her words as if life and death depended on them.

"I would still believe in you even if the whole world turned against you," she said, earnestly.

"Thank God for that," he cried, fervently, straining her to his breast again. "I feel that I could indeed face the whole world and bid it defiance now that I know your confidence in me is so unshaken," and he added sadly, "God knows I will need your confidence and support."

"Put your faith and trust in Him who rules all things," she said, solemnly, "for all things work together for His good, and I can see the finger of the Almighty pointing to some great good that has been done when the black clouds of war have been dispelled and the white wings of the dove of peace shall have once more settled down over our beloved country."

"Would that you were that dove, endowed with the power to settle down and dispel the dark gloom hanging over us which will rend and sap the vitality of the Union to the utmost."

"God has decreed otherwise, and we must bow to His will," she answered.

"But what are your sentiments in regard to this impending disaster, sweetheart?" he asked, anxiously.

"As a daughter of the South, I can but remain loyal. All my sentiments and love are in favor of this sunny land, which has been my home longer than memory can travel backward," she said.

"And you can still love and trust me, in spite of the fact that in a few days I will probably be fighting against the South, which is even more my home than your own, for you were born in the North, while I was born and reared in the home which even now stands within a stone's throw of us?" he asked, doubtfully.

"I love and respect you more for the manly stand you have taken in the face of so many difficulties than if you were to fight for the South, even though I love it well enough to lay down my very life should duty call me to do so," she answered, earnestly.

"I, too, would lay down my life most cheerfully, could I but see a way to stop the North and South from becoming embroiled in this fearful struggle. I love the South with my whole heart, but I love the Union still more. My teachings in the northern colleges have taught me many things which heretofore I never dreamed of, and the voice of duty calls me to take up arms and fight for the preservation of the Union," he said.

"I fully understand your sentiments, James, and I shall not try to persuade you to waver from the path you think is right," she replied.

"You are an angel, Jessie," he cried, rapturously. "Though we may be foes, we shall still be friends."

"Yes, and lovers, too," she said, nestling closer to his breast.

"Was a man or lover ever placed in a more trying or strange position than I am?" he asked, gazing sorrowfully into the

beautiful upturned face of the maiden whom he loved better than life itself.

"Let your love for me be your shield and guide for right, and justice will some day reward you as you deserve.

"'Tis always darkest just before dawn, and the dark clouds about to burst over our unprotected heads will soon spend themselves from their own fury, and then will come sunshine, and we shall look back upon these dark days, which shall have become but a memory, and say, "'Twas all for the best,' and out of the ashes of the past has risen a golden future, strewn with the roses of success, which will never fade nor grow dim."

"You are a wise little prophet, and I hope all will be well with us yet," said James, fondly. "But come, sweetheart; the hour grows late, and I must see you safely under the roof of your grandfather, and if we tarry longer the servants will be in bed. To-morrow I will call and see your grandfather and tell him the position I feel in duty bound to assume."

"He will be dreadfully angry with you, James," she said, "and I know he will forbid you ever seeing or speaking to me again. But I will meet you in the woods down by the spring back of the house at 3 o'clock to-morrow afternoon, and we can lay our plans for the future."

Jessie's home was soon reached, and, after taking an affectionate good-bye of her, he wended his way slowly and thoughtfully homeward.

That they were not pleasant thoughts the gentle reader must accept as a matter of course, but there was one gleam of sunshine through the dark rift of clouds—Jessie's assurance of her trust and confidence, which buoyed up his spirits and gave him strength to follow up the path of his convictions.

When he reached home, he found all quiet and the servants in bed; but his faithful old dog Rover came out scampering and barking to see him, which aroused old Uncle Joe and Aunt Lizzie, the two faithful black servants who had been in the service of the Vernons all their lives, and their parents before them, having been slaves of James' forefathers.

Uncle Joe met him at the door, exclaiming, "My goodness, Marse James! we suah didn't expect to see you home at dis time. Here you, Lizzie," he called out to his spouse, "get up dis berry minute. De young marse has done come home again."

There was no need to call Aunt Lizzie, however, for she knew the footfall of her young master as does the mother that of her own child. She had been his nurse in childhood, and, although black, no more loving heart ever beat in the bosom of woman than in the breast of this faithful, loving old colored woman.

She watched him grow to almost young manhood with a pride that was almost idolatry.

Uncle Joe and Aunt Lizzie were the only servants left on the plantation out of over twenty that had been kept by James' father. The rest had all been sold by his Uncle Thomas.

Uncle Joe's and Aunt Lizzie's married daughter and her husband had been among the number.

They were taken to Mississippi by a planter to toil their lives away under a hot tropical sun, with no hopes of the future, and when they should become too old for further service be turned out as a worthless horse which has outlived its usefulness.

The parting of Uncle Joe and Aunt Lizzie from their daughter had been a most bitter one, although belonging to a race forever debarred from the inner circles of society by the laws of nature, the parting was none the less hard, not knowing whether they would ever be able to see or communicate with each other again in life.

What must have been the feelings of those poor, helpless black creatures, sold into bondage to first one master and then another!

It is true that they had a good home and were happy and contented as slaves on the Vernon plantation, but this very fact would make it so much the harder when they fell into

the hands of masters less merciful than James' forefathers had been.

But I am wandering from my subject, and, with the reader's kind permission, we shall leave our hero to repose until morning, when we again find him wending his way back over the same road traversed the night before.

On reaching Colonel Green's home, he was at once ushered into the presence of that friend whom he was now about to lose through the fortunes of war. The Colonel opened the conversation by alluding to the forthcoming struggle and making plans, and in them he already had the Yankees routed out and Jefferson Davis installed as president of the whole American continent.

"My boy, we will wipe them off the face of the earth in six months' time," he exclaimed, warming up to his subject. "I shall organize a regiment, and you shall be captain.

"O, I tell you I am growing young again amidst all this excitement. Abe Lincoln will soon be a back number, and I should not be a bit surprised to see you become Commander-in-Chief of the Confederate forces before the end of the war."

"I hope nothing so disastrous as that will happen me," said James, slowly.

"What's that! what's that!" shouted the Colonel, springing to his feet instantly. "You must have misunderstood me, my boy. I said you may become Commander-in-Chief of the Confederate forces before this war ends."

"I heard perfectly well what you said, my more than friend," said James, slowly, "but I cannot fight on the side you wish me to."

"You cannot fight on the side I want you to!" repeated the Colonel, evidently unable to comprehend the full import of James' speech.

"Colonel, you have been both father and mother to me," said James, sorrowfully, "and it grieves me more than you

can imagine to speak the words which I fear will make you my mortal enemy for life."

"Your enemy I can never be," said the Colonel, interrupting him. But James gently laid his hand on the old man's shoulder, and with as few words as possible told him of his resolution to fight for the Union.

"My boy, you cannot mean what you say!" he said, like one in a dream. "That you, above all men on the face of the earth, should become a traitor to your State I cannot, will not, believe."

"Nevertheless, it is true," said James, gently, but firmly. "My ideas of right and wrong differ from yours, and I must act as my conscience dictates."

"Think it over, my boy! Think what it means to you, think what it means to us all! Jessie is the worst little rebel in Culpepper, and should she even so much as suspect that you have given one kind thought to the North, she would denounce you as a coward and a traitor."

A vision of Jessie as she had stood before him only a few hours before in all her loveliness and purity, counselling him to act as his conscience dictated, arose before his eyes, and a half-sad smile arose to his lips unobserved by the Colonel, who as yet could not fully master the complete surprise that had overtaken him. But presently the storm would break, as James well knew, and what the outcome would be James was at a loss to know.

"I would act as my conscience directed me to act toward my country and my God regardless of the whole world," said James.

"Even your love for Jessie cannot alter your determination to become a traitor?" said the Colonel, now white with suppressed anger.

"No," said James. "Nothing on earth can alter or change my determination to act as I think right."

"Then hear me, you cowardly traitor! If I had the power, I would have you swing from the nearest tree as an example

to all other traitors to their country. I could forgive or overlook anything you have done except that you should turn traitor."

"Jessie, oh Jessie!" he called in a loud voice, vibrating with passion. "Come here."

Jessie, who had been close by, answered the summons instantly, walking into the room and glancing from the convulsively-working face of her grandfather to that of her pale, but calm, lover.

Before anyone else could speak, the Colonel burst forth in a torrent of words, exclaiming, "Look at the face of the man whom you love and whom I have loved as a son! Do you not see the stamp of traitor on his brow? He has had the effrontery to tell me to my very face that he will fight for the North, regardless of what I or what you or what the whole world says, for that matter! Jessie, I command you to drive him from your presence as you would a rattlesnake, as a thing to be abhorred, to be shunned by all mankind, for of all the most contemptible things on God's green earth, a coward and traitor is the greatest."

"James a coward and a traitor! That I will never believe as long as God gives me the strength and reasoning power to believe otherwise," said Jessie, throwing her arms about James' neck.

"Wait a minute, you jade," said the Colonel, wrathfully; "for, if I am not mistaken, he will with his own mouth condemn himself."

"What he would say would make no difference in my eyes," she said, calmly, "for we met in the road last night, and I know all;—know of his manly resolution to act as his conscience directs him, even though by so doing he loses all—home, friends, and everything that is dear to him."

"You have met him and still cling to him, after all he has told us both! You little jade! I will have you locked up in an insane asylum. I forbid you ever seeing or speaking with him again! How dare you disobey me before my very face?"

said the angry Colonel, pounding on the floor with his heavy cane, an article he invariably carried with him.

"I dare do anything for the man I love. It is the spirit of the grandfather in the bosom of his granddaughter that now defies you. Hear me, and then turn me out if you will. I swear to be true and loyal to my lover until he shall come to claim me as his wife, and I pray that no bullet cut short the life of my betrothed husband!" exclaimed Jessie, her cheeks flushed and her eyes sparkling.

James could hardly repress the mad desire to seize her in his arms and carry her away from her old bear of a grandfather.

"I will not turn you out, you crafty jade, for that is doubtless just what you want me to do, so you could fly to the arms of your traitor lover, and you would be man and wife before nightfall," said the old man, fairly quivering with rage and mortification, for in all her sweet, young life Jessie had never spoken thus to him before. "No, miss," he resumed. "I forbid you to leave this house until this young traitor has shaken the dust of Culpepper from his shoes."

"You need not do that, sir," said James. "I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that I will neither seek nor speak to Jessie again before my departure, which will be but a few short hours at most. We planned a meeting down by the spring, but that we will forego."

"If I had my way, I would have you court-martialed and hanged," said the Colonel, grimly, but somewhat mollified; for he well knew that James would keep his word.

James turned to go, and the Colonel, as a parting shot, said: "I shall go to Culpepper this very afternoon and change my will. I intended to leave everything I possessed to Jessie and yourself; but, now that you both defy me, I will cut you both out of my will entirely if you ever dare to marry against my wishes."

James made no reply to this last unkind threat, but hur-

riedly took his leave for home after kissing Jessie and Mrs. Green good-bye.

As the door closed behind the form of the young man whom he loved as a son, Colonel Green quickly made his way to his own room, for he was about to break down, and he would rather have died than have shown one particle of weakness before Jessie or his wife.

Secretly he respected the young man for the stand he had taken, well knowing that James acted conscientiously; but he had given his word that he would alter his will, and it was his intention to do so, but at the same time he made up his mind to change it back to the original to the first opportunity and leave everything to them with his blessing and best wishes.

Ah, foolish old man! Could you but have foreseen the events that were about to transpire in the future, you would not have been so hasty to have the family carriage take you to Culpepper. Instead, you would have hastened to the home of the young man you had driven forth friendless and alone and humbly begged his pardon for the wrong you had done him.

On reaching home, James immediately packed up what few belongings he wished to take with him, gave Uncle Joe and Aunt Lizzie what instructions he considered necessary regarding the plantation, and once more turned his face toward Culpepper and what the future held in store for him.

As he passed by the Colonel's plantation, he looked up toward a certain window of the second story of the old mansion and saw a white handkerchief fluttering in token of farewell. He kissed his hand in return, and resolutely turned toward Culpepper again.

On reaching the village, almost the first person he met was the Colonel, who passed by with his head tilted high in the air, pretending not to see him.

He barely had time to transact what little business was necessary before the toot of the horn was sounded at the

hotel, announcing time had arrived for the departure of the stage.

Hastily scrambling into the only remaining vacant seat, he was soon rolling over the old turnpike toward the North once more.

CHAPTER II.

The Soldier

James barely reached the Northern States before the call for troops began. He was one of the first to enlist, going into the service as a private soldier in a New York regiment, but before the end of the first year's service he was given a commission as second lieutenant, and in the second year he was raised to captain. It was while holding this commission that his regiment came in contact with that of Colonel Green, who joined the rebel forces at the beginning of hostilities.

The battle had been a long, fierce one. The rebels were driven back from the summit of a high hill, and the ground was strewn with the bodies of the dead and dying blue and graycoats.

James was the first to reach the summit of the hill, but little did he dream of the terrible cost of that victory.

Night fell as a welcome boon to both armies, who immediately began to look after the dead and wounded as soon as hostilities ceased.

James was walking among the slain and fallen, doing everything in his power to save a life or soothe the pain of some of his faithful followers, when, to his horror, he saw the blood-stained face of Colonel Green lying among the victims. In the bloody upturned face was the stamp of death, but consciousness still held sway, and he recognized James at once.

"'Tis the fortune of war, my boy," he said, in a husky voice in which no trace of anger or resentment lingered.

Kneeling beside the prostrate form of the Colonel, James raised the gray head in his strong young arms.

"My boy, I am going," he said. "Take good care of Jessie and the little mother at home. Both are waiting and longing for our return; but the fortunes of war have decreed that at least one of us shall never live to see those two beloved ones

again. Tell them that with my last breath I forgave you, and that it was my dying wish you might be united to the faithful little girl who defied her old grandfather for your sake. Gad!" he exclaimed, the memory of her defiant retorts coming back to his fast-failing memory. "How beautiful she looked when defending you against what I now know to be my unjust taunts! She is a true granddaughter of her stubborn old granddaddy."

Here he fainted from loss of blood, and James, calling some guards, had him laid tenderly upon a stretcher and carried to his own quarters, where a physician was summoned and declared that the patient had but a short time to live.

A shell had burst just in front of him, and a fragment had penetrated a vital part. Under the skillful work of the doctor, the patient soon regained consciousness, but it was the consciousness that precedes death.

He weakly motioned James to bend over him.

"What is it, father?" he asked, unable to steady his voice.

The dying man's ear caught the word father, and a pleased look came over his face. It was the first time James had ever addressed him thus.

"I have always tried to be a father to you, my son," he said, weakly, "and I have never done anything but once that a father would not have done, and if God spares my life but a few moments longer I will rectify that."

"Do not talk of worldly matters now, father. Let us talk of ourselves, of Jessie and the poor little woman who will watch for your return in vain."

"I know, I know, my boy; but first I must right a great wrong I did you and Jessie that unfortunate day in Culpepper. Now do as I bid you. The time grows short for me to live. Hasten and get witnesses and the proper officials, that I may change my will while there is yet time."

The doctor kindly volunteered his services, saying there was nothing else he could do for the injured man. But he was too late. The spirit of Colonel Green winged its flight to

the great beyond ere he could hasten back with proper officials.

James managed to send word to Jessie of the Colonel's death. She gently communicated the news to her feeble old grandmother, who never survived the shock, and in three weeks after the fatal news reached her she, too, was laid at rest.

In the last battle of the war between the opposing forces James' Uncle Thomas was slain. He enlisted as an officer of high rank, owing to his political influence, but, being detected in some underhanded methods and dishonorable conduct, he was greatly reduced in rank, and his death came as a welcome boon to the unfortunate soldiers who chanced to be under his authority.

James quite by accident heard of his death, but it caused him more relief than sorrow, for his uncle had never shown him a particle of kindness or affection during his life, and the debts on the plantation caused by his depredations nearly equalled its value.

At the close of the war, James hastened to Culpepper to claim Jessie as his bride.

The will had long ago been read, which was as follows:

"I, Harold Green, of Culpepper, Virginia, being of sound mind, do solemnly swear in the presence of witnesses on this day, March 18th, 1861, that, in the event of my death, I leave one-third of all my wealth to Angeline Green; the other two-thirds to my granddaughter, Jessie Hamilton.

"If, however, my granddaughter marries James Vernon, of Culpepper, she shall forfeit all right to my estate, and it shall revert to my wife, Angeline Green, providing she does not try to dispose of it in favor of my granddaughter, Jessie Hamilton, or James Vernon, of Culpepper.

"If my wife tries to dispose of the estate in favor of the two above-mentioned persons, my entire estate shall be given to the Associated Charities, to be distributed among the poor according to the judgment of its officers."

On learning of this strange will, James and Jessie endeavored to have it broken, bringing forward the doctor, who was the only person except James who heard the Colonel say he wished to alter his will. The evidence was not strong enough, however, and the will could not be broken.

Jessie nobly gave up her inheritance, and together they went to Michigan, taking with them the former slaves of James' father, Uncle Joe, Aunt Lizzie and her daughter and son-in-law, who had hastened back to Culpepper at the first opportunity after the close of the war.

Their master in the South had been a most cruel one, and it was horrible to hear them recite the tales of suffering they were forced to undergo.

They thanked God that freedom had come at last!

CHAPTER III.

Off for the New Home

The journey from Culpepper to Michigan was a long one, but he had God's three most precious gifts to man—health, hope, and the unfathomable love of a maiden's heart, which made the journey seem short.

The distance had to be covered with teams, each of the negroes driving a team, and James the third one.

He had no definite point in view, but trusted to providence and his six sturdy horses to carry him to a country where there was more chance of winning back the wealth he had lost.

The breadth of Virginia was slowly traversed, and then came the muddy roads of Ohio, where traveling was more difficult and there were fewer roads. Several times they missed their way, traveling miles out of their direct course; but it mattered little to them. They were enjoying young love's first pleasant dreams, and all roads had but one destination: the golden future to be shared with each other.

Several times large rivers were encountered, but James' experience in the army taught him how to overcome the difficulties of traveling in a wild, unsettled country.

At times they came upon smiling, cultivated fields and bustling little cities, and then they would again plunge into the midst of seemingly endless forests.

Their trusty rifles supplied them with fresh meats at all times, and Aunt Lizzie's skillful cooking always brought words of praise from both James' and Jessie's lips.

Detroit was at last reached, and the little caravan stopped for a week's rest. While camping here, James heard of the wonderful opportunities offered in the lumber business to any who were brave enough to face the dangers of the forest, and, after holding a consultation with Jessie, it was decided that they would push up north and penetrate the very heart of the

vast forests. Accordingly they again took up the line of march, finally reaching Saginaw City, at that time the Mecca of all prospective lumber men.

By dint of much questioning, he learned that the best timber lay along the Tidiabassee and Chippewa Rivers, and, after purchasing certain implements needed in the lumber woods, such as axes, saws, log hooks, etc., they left Saginaw, following the west bank of the Saginaw River to the mouth of the Tidiabassee, thence up that river to the mouth of the Chippewa, where the river was crossed by means of a raft.

From here on, the most difficult traveling of their journey was experienced. Tangled vines, matted weeds, huge trees and underbrush blocked their progress, and at times they were obliged to hew down trees. Where the river was shallow and sandy-bottomed they drove for long stretches in its bed.

After a journey of five days, they came upon a veritable paradise in the forest. The river at this point formed over a mile of rapids, winding around in the shape of a horse-shoe. At the end of the horse-shoe several Indian huts peeped up among the underbrush, and the Indians were lounging about or fishing in the river; many of the younger generation were engaged in various sports, while the women were either cooking or carrying wood to their wigwams for domestic purposes.

The little caravan approached within a few rods of the Indian encampment before they were discovered, but their appearance seemed to create no excitement, much to the surprise of James and the two negroes. Their astonishment was still greater when an Indian of giant stature approached and addressed them in perfect English, asking them where they were going and where they came from.

In a short time they were surrounded by men and women and children as well. The wagon and negroes were evidently a curiosity to them, but it was evident that they were accustomed to the visits of white men, for, after glancing carelessly at James and Jessie, their eyes wandered to the ebony-colored faces of the negroes, who brought up the rear.

The giant Indian who first addressed James spoke up, saying, "Heap black face, no wash for many moons." James explained that it was not dirt, but their natural color, and, seeing his red friend still look doubtful, he called Uncle Joe up where they stood conversing, and then, taking a pail, he stepped down to the river, but a few feet distant. Filling it to the brim, he bade Uncle Joe bathe his hands and face.

Seeing that the black did not come off, the chief endeavored to wash it off himself, and, finding he was unable to do so, his face gradually took on a look of fear and then reverence, and, turning to his followers, he spoke rapidly in the Indian tongue, whereupon the whole tribe grovelled on the ground in front of Uncle Joe, who seemed to enjoy his popularity immensely.

James burst into a laugh, saying: "Joe, you are their great spirit now. They have evidently never seen a black person before, and they think you colored people have come to them as an act of providence. By Jove!" he chuckled, "let them think so, and we shall have plain sailing from now on. This place just suits my fancy. These rapids will furnish power enough to supply a city as large as New York. I will buy all the land bordering on the rapids, and some day I hope to found a city here."

To purchase the land from the Indians was an easy matter, for, in their eagerness to have the negroes remain, they offered it for absolutely nothing, but, being a fair-minded man, James could not accept their generous offer, but gave them nearly all of the money left from the sale of the plantation, and got a deed of the land drawn up at Saginaw.

CHAPTER IV.

The Finding of Little Violet on the Veranda

Mr. Vernon's life in the army well fitted him to meet and conquer the difficulties in his path in taking up his home in the wilderness of trees that covered the heart of Michigan at that time.

With the help of the two negroes, he cut down a small clearing in the forest bordering on the river, and built a substantial log house and several out-buildings. After this had been accomplished, he set to work felling the giants of the forest and hauling them to the river.

In the spring of the year, when the ice broke and the river was at its highest point, the three men rolled the logs into the water and floated them to Saginaw, where they sold them at the various saw mills.

This proved to be such a profitable business that in a few years he was able to buy more land and hired large gangs of men to do the work for him.

Three children blessed the union of James and Jessie. Frank, the eldest, was dark and of a quick and passionate nature and was his father's most valuable assistant in business matters. James, or Jimmie, as he was more familiarly known, was exactly opposite from Frank both in looks and disposition. He had a sunny, careless way about him that won him friends wherever he went. His sister Mary, the youngest of the three children, was dark, like Frank, but had a disposition more like James.

A few days after the birth of Mary a strange thing happened. The family had just retired for the night one dark, stormy evening in the month of April, when a violent peal of the door bell aroused the whole household.

Mr. Vernon was the first one to reach the door, and he nearly fell over a small object lying on the threshold, but the

person or persons who rang the bell had disappeared as completely as though the earth had opened up and swallowed them.

The object was picked up and carried into the house, and when unwrapped was found to contain the body of an infant female apparently about three weeks old. Around its neck and suspended by a golden chain was a beautiful gold watch of curious design and of small pattern, evidently for a lady to carry. On the inside lid was engraved the letters "H. H. to N. M., Geneva, May 12, 1859." A locket was also attached to the chain, and in it was the photograph of a gloriously beautiful woman, apparently about twenty-four years of age. The clear-cut features of the lady bore the unmistakable marks of good breeding and refinement. The broad, white forehead, the expressive eyes, the mobile mouth and firmly-chiseled chin gave to her face a look of firmness and resolution. The face was decidedly an English one, and if appearances counted for anything, she belonged to the upper walks of life.

The watch and locket containing the photograph was the only evidence left by which to trace the parentage of the child. Every effort was made to locate them, but without avail, and the child was finally legally adopted into the family.

The little stranger and Mr. Vernon's daughter were nearly the same age, and they grew up as sisters. The affection between the two girls was very touching. The little stranger was of a loving, clinging disposition, and that of Mr. Vernon's daughter Mary free and independent, which accounted for their close friendship. As unlike in looks as in disposition, they made a pretty picture when together, the golden locks of little Violet—for such they named her—mingling with the dark tresses of Mary, made a picture that would have delighted the eyes of an artist.

But, let us return once more to Mr. Vernon before we drop him out of this tale as a principal. We left him in the lumber business, in which he was fast growing rich.

A small saw mill was constructed, a number of cottages were built, and a small, but busy, little village sprang up. He started a general supply store, bringing his goods up the river either by raft or by wagon, the latter way being much more difficult. There were as yet no regular highways penetrating the dense forests.

After the store was opened, other business enterprises were launched, and in a few years enough business was transacted to warrant the building of a bank. Mr. Vernon was elected president, and a short time later, when the Ann Arbor Railroad built through the place, it was incorporated as a city, and he was chosen mayor, and the name changed from that of Long Rapids to Mt. Vernon, in honor of the man who, by hard work and perseverance, converted the place from a virgin forest to a bustling little city, with noisy mill wheels and screaming steam whistles.

Mr. Vernon's two sons were always the best of friends while young, although the tastes of each were entirely different. Frank preferred the companionship of books and older persons, while James' greatest delight in life consisted of rambling about the woods with his dog and gun, or going down to the river with a number of companions, where he generally managed to fall into the water, thereby getting a spanking upon reaching home.

At school he was acknowledged the champion of all athletic contests. In fact, he took more interest in a wrestling bout or a football game than he did in his studies, and as a result he was often at the foot of his class.

And so time passed on.

CHAPTER V.

Expelled from School

Toward the end of one school term, when James was about the age of fifteen, a base-ball game was arranged to take place between the high school students and the basket factory team, a local organization.

The principal of the school hated sports of all kinds, and took particular pains on all occasions to spoil a game of any kind.

For the convenience of the factory boys, the game was scheduled to take place on Tuesday afternoon, and the students obtained permission from the school board to hold a half holiday to celebrate the occasion. The principal, however, had other views, and insisted on holding a lengthy examination on that particular day. The morning passed very well, but when afternoon came not a student was to be seen anywhere, but shouts on the ball ground a half mile away were evidence enough to inform the old crab that his attempt to spoil the game had failed. He retaliated, however, by marking down the average of each student, James in particular, for he was always at the head of every enterprise where there was a contest involved.

The professor took a hearty dislike to James from the first, which the latter returned with interest, and he never lost an opportunity to annoy or disturb the old crank when an opportunity presented itself. The relations between himself and the students had been strained before, but they were ready to burst into open rebellion now at any moment.

A consultation was held among the students, and various ways were discussed whereby they might play even. Many plans were suggested, but none seemed feasible, until the fertile brain of Frank hit upon the plan of putting tacks into

his chair, which was a heavy piece of oak furniture, with a solid bottom.

The professor, who was a little near-sighted, always sat down in his chair with a plump that was audible all over the school-room. The fact that he was near-sighted and sat down so heavily is no doubt what caused Frank to think of this idea.

A piece of leather, nearly the full size of the chair bottom, was obtained at a shoe shop, and a whole box of tacks were driven through this leather, with their points sticking upward toward the heavens.

The next thing to be done was to find a way to put it in the chair without being detected, and a committee was chosen to make a midnight excursion to the school house, where they raised a window and made their way to the upper floors, and the leather, with its rows upon rows of sharp tacks, was placed in the chair.

The next morning all was expectancy. The professor, contrary to his usual custom, stood up during the opening exercises. Becoming interested in a certain lesson which did not interest the scholars in the least, he endeavored to pound its fundamental principles in their unwilling minds.

The forenoon wore its weary length nearly through before the professor showed any inclination to sit down. He seemed to have forgotten all about his comfortable chair.

The scholars were unusually dull, and he finally gave it up in disgust, for their notes were so badly muddled up that James actually wrote the word tacks in his composition.

With a grunt of disgust, he finally threw himself down in the chair with unusual vigor. But, ye gods! what a sit-down that was, for, with a yell of pain and rage, he leaped high into the air, both hands tightly grasping the seat of his unmentionables; the leather stuck tight to its place, no doubt held there by the sharp points of the tacks.

With many a wriggle and exclamation that did not sound exactly right in a school-room, he finally extracted the offensive piece of leather and its complicated pieces of machinery from his person.

The faces of all the students were convulsed with laughter, but some unknown impulse prompted him to place all the blame on the innocent head of James, for, with a roar of rage, he made straight for the boy. Not for nought was he called the best athlete in the school, for, seeing the blind rage of the professor, he knew that to tamely submit to him meant to be beaten up in a manner not good for his future appearance or constitution. Before the infuriated man could reach him, James arose from his seat, and, with a well-directed blow, he sent the man sprawling in the aisle.

The professor was up in an instant, and now, fairly mad with rage, made another lunge at the boy, who met him in exactly the same manner, and with more telling effect, for this time he seemed to be a little dazed and did not get up quite so quickly. When he did rise, he was more cautious, and advanced with the intention of grappling with his youthful antagonist, but here again he was surprised, for James, seeing that he could not avoid him, and being the shorter of the two, he caught the professor around the waist, securing the underhold, and then issued a struggle between man and boy that was terrific, for both were now thoroughly enraged, although James kept his head with a coolness that would have done credit to a veteran of the prize ring, watching every opportunity for an advantage over his antagonist.

The great bulk and strength of the professor were strained to their utmost, but it seemed to avail nothing against the unaccountable agility of the young giant whom he was endeavoring to crush. Backward and forward they swayed, the impetus of their exertions carrying them out to the center of the floor.

Never before had such wrestling been witnessed, even in the city gymnasium, where the brawny sons of the woods were wont to gather when in the city and hold boxing and wrestling contests.

The professor, who had been a famous athlete at college, seemed to have forgotten none of the old tricks of the game,

and tried them all, but was met at every point by the young athlete, who now seemed to be gaining a slight advantage.

With a supreme effort, the professor forced his opponent backward until James' sunny curls nearly swept the floor, but just as it seemed as though the superior weight and bulk of the professor was about to conquer a strange thing happened, so quickly that none were quite able to see exactly how it was done, but James was seen to suddenly loosen his hold and, swiftly slipping from beneath his enemy, he was up quick as a flash, and, seizing his opponent by the collar and the middle, he was seen to raise him high in the air above his head and then, with a mighty effort, the body of the professor flew through the air and struck with a sickening thud against the wall, where he lay as though dead, with the blood flowing from a cut in his head.

The motions of the two had been so fast and furious that none seemed to think of interfering, but now that it was all over a score or more hastened to the side of the professor, none quicker than James when he saw the consequences of his act. A dozen ran for water, which was dashed in his face, but without avail, and a doctor was finally summoned, who worked over him for several hours before restoring his patient to consciousness.

He was confined to his bed for several days, and then a consultation was held by the Board of Education, and James was dismissed from school. Frank was the student who had placed the tacks in the professor's chair, but he was to graduate in a few weeks, and immediately after he was to become cashier of the Mt. Vernon Savings Bank, and, rather than see him expelled from school in disgrace and endanger his future prospects, James nobly took all the blame of the affair upon his own shoulders, thereby stopping any further inquiries into the matter.

After being expelled from school, James was employed as a lumber scaler by his father, and Frank became cashier at

the bank a few weeks after graduating from the Mt. Vernon High School.

Violet and Mary made many trips with James to the various logging camps, sometimes both accompanying him; at other times only one would go with him.

Up to this time there had been perfect harmony in the Vernon household, but soon after the boys left school the sharp eyes of Mrs. Vernon detected the growing love of both boys for Violet.

Frank managed to conceal his real feelings from all except Mrs. Vernon, but James' frank, open nature could be easily read by every one almost as soon as he became conscious of it himself, and Violet seemed to return his affection.

CHAPTER VI.

Brother against Brother

Frank was a true Southerner, both in looks and disposition, and all his hot southern nature was aroused when he saw the love they bore each other.

Seeking the first opportunity, he asked Violet to become his wife. She was sitting in an old grape arbor in the grounds, and gently, but firmly refused him. Losing all control of himself, he grasped her in his arms, swearing that unless she consented to marry him, he would end both their lives, and, in his mad jealousy and passion, would probably have made good his threat had not James come along, most opportunely.

Being of an honest and trusting character himself, he never dreamed that Frank cared for her aught except as a sister; but the scared and agitated look on Violet's face and the positively murderous one on Frank's caused the scales to drop from his eyes and the truth lay revealed.

With a muttered curse, Frank released her and strode away, leaving James and Violet alone together. He well knew that he would be a mere toy in the hands of his younger brother, should it come to a test of physical strength.

"Did he frighten you, Violet?" he asked, tenderly, putting his arm around her in a brotherly way.

"Yes," she replied, tremblingly. "He frightened me terribly."

"What did he say to you?" asked James.

"O, don't ask me!" she sobbed. "I must go away from here immediately, for I fear something dreadful may happen if I remain here another day."

"Nonsense," said James, in a voice that sounded much more confident than he really felt. "This little storm will soon blow over."

"O you do not know all, or you would not speak so lightly of the matter."

"Has he dared to—" began James in a voice hoarse with passion.

It was the first time she had ever seen the light-hearted James really angry or excited, although she was accustomed to the outbursts of temper on the part of Frank. She began to see there was a strength of character beneath the surface of James' careless nature that she had not dreamed of. His teeth came together with a click, and his muscular hands clinched together until the nails sunk far into the flesh.

"No! no! it is not that, James," she said, proudly, in an injured voice.

"Forgive me, little one; I am so wrought up that I know not what I am saying."

"You must promise me that you will seek no trouble with your brother for my sake nor on my account," she said, earnestly, clinging to his arm.

A twinge of jealousy shot through James' usually just mind, and he retorted, "Are you afraid your lover will get hurt?"

"That is not like you, James," she said, quietly. "You know that your brother would be nothing in your hands, and you know full well that I know it also. It is for both your sakes that I seek your promise. Remember your mother. It would break her heart to know that anything had happened to make you two enemies, and it would kill me to know that I was the cause of making the sons of my kind benefactress enemies."

She was gazing up into his eyes so piteously, her beautiful eyes wet with dew, her pretty lips parted, showing a row of pearly teeth, and the vision aroused all the pent-up love and passion of his heart, and, bending down, he caught her in his arms, raining sweet kisses on her beautiful, upturned face. This time she did not seek to draw away, and, throwing her arms about his neck, she clung to him. But there was a rude interruption at this point.

Frank strode away, leaving the pair alone in the grape arbor, but he did not lose sight of them, for, turning around in a circle, he made his way back on the opposite side of the arbor and stood where he could see and hear all that took place within. On witnessing the scene just described, he lost all control of himself, and, seizing an old rusty axe, he rushed upon the two unsuspecting persons within. His foot chanced to strike against an empty gasoline can, overturning it and causing it to fall with a crash.

On hearing the noise, James released Violet and turned just in time to catch the swiftly-descending blade aimed at his head. Should the blow have fallen it would have cleft him to the chin. Seizing the handle, he wrenched it from his maddened brother's grasp, and flung it far from the arbor. But the other was mad with fury, and flung himself against James with his whole strength.

He might as well have tried to throw down one of the giant oaks standing near the arbor. Seizing him by the collar and the middle, James swung him off his feet and raised him far above his head; but a frightened gentle voice at his side said, "Remember he is your brother!" James slowly let the struggling form of his brother reach the ground, and released the now for a time completely cowed man, who slunk away, and, sinking on a rustic bench, James let his head rest in his hands.

A soft voice at his side aroused him, and, turning his gaze toward her, he saw something which drove all other thoughts from his mind.

"How grand and noble you looked," she said, "when you put Frank down! You are yourself now, and I know that I can trust you to avoid future trouble with him."

"Will you trust me always?" he asked, taking her hand.

"Yes, always," she replied, and James, taking advantage of the opportunity, said, boldly, "Will you be my wife, Violet?"

The question came so unexpectedly that she did not answer

at once, but hesitated, undecided. But James caught her in his arms, saying, "Now you have made me promise one or two things, you must promise me this."

"I will," she replied, slipping out of his arms, "on condition that you keep yours."

"That is all I ask," he said, trying to catch her in his arms again, but she tripped away through the vines, calling back over her shoulder, "Remember your promise."

No one but the three principals in this little comedy in the grape arbor ever knew what took place. The relation between the two brothers had been somewhat strained for a few months past, but Frank, on meeting James at the supper table that evening, made himself quite pleasant, much to the surprise of all.

James, being of an honorable character himself, never thought of treachery, and, thinking Frank to be ashamed of himself, he did all in his power to smooth over the trouble.

No one but Violet suspected anything, and she resolved to warn James to be on his guard, for she read in Frank's smooth talk and false smiles a terrible meaning.

The apparently more friendly relations of James and Frank caused a great deal of happiness in the bosom of Mrs. Vernon. Mr. Vernon, being so deeply absorbed in business matters, had not noticed anything wrong between his two sons, and Mrs. Vernon wisely kept her own counsel.

Catching the spirit of the evening in his veins, Mr. Vernon proposed that he should take the two boys into the company, and the name of The Vernon Mercantile, Banking and Lumber Company be changed to James Vernon & Sons' Mercantile, Banking and Lumber Company.

It was decided that James should look after the lumber department, Frank should have charge of the banking system, and Mr. Vernon the mercantile department.

The two boys were regarded as the most promising young business men in the city, and for a long time Frank never gave the slightest hint to any one of the mad love that was

consuming his very soul, and that was soon to break loose and wreck the happiness of two young lives, send himself to prison and break his mother's loving heart and send his father to an early grave.

Ah, love, what a power art thou for good or evil! And how by thy aid the worst of mortals may become angels, and *vice versa*, the best of mortals—the worst.

CHAPTER VII.

The Log Jam.—James' Heroic Rescue of the Little Ragged Urchin from the River

The winter following James' expulsion from school was a most favorable one for the lumber business. The snow-fall had been the heaviest on record, and the great natural reservoir twelve miles above the city was full of logs, and for many miles the river banks were lined with thousands upon thousands of the huge giants that had been for countless years the proud monarchs of the forest.

The water in the reservoir had been stored up until the great dam threatened to give way beneath the tremendous weight bearing upon it.

The spring launching was the greatest event of the year in those days, and the whole country turned out to see the spectacle.

The launching was scheduled to take place on the 1st of April, and Mr. Vernon's entire family was present when it occurred. After a short speech by Mr. Vernon, a few replies by some of the most prominent men of Saginaw, the great sluice gates were opened at a signal from Mr. Vernon, and immediately the great flood was pouring through them.

The huge logs shot through the dam like great rockets, burying themselves far beneath the foam-capped waves.

A great shout went up from thousands of throats at sight of the beautiful spectacle, but soon changed to one of fear as a ragged little urchin was seen to dart out upon the very edge of the trembling dam and dance gleefully about above the rushing, roaring vortex.

The sister of the child rushed madly out to drag her little brother back to safety, but she was seized by a brawny lumberman and held back, while a dozen of the hardy timbermen rushed upon the trembling dam to save the child, but they

were too late, for, just as the foremost was about to grasp the little fellow, a great log was seen to rear itself on end, turn completely over and fall with crushing force on the sluice gate beside the child.

The shock of the great log threw the little fellow off his balance and he fell headlong into the boiling, rushing water, which swept him in an instant far below, among the tumbling, grinding logs.

A cry of horror rose from the multitude on the shores and the river men were seen to hesitate, and their rugged cheeks to blanch, for to leap into that boiling, seething whirlpool meant what seemed to be certain death by drowning or, far worse, to be crushed like an egg-shell between the tossing logs.

None but those who have actually witnessed a jam of logs going through a narrow dam can fully realize the terrible danger to the unfortunate one who is once caught in its deadly grasp.

As the lumbermen stood staring at each other, a lithe form was seen to suddenly dart out upon the dam, throwing off clothes as he ran, and, with the agility and strength of a tiger, leap far over a whirling log, sink for an instant from view, reappear into the roaring vortex of water, and, with a few powerful strokes, direct his course in a line with that of the drowning child.

It was a matter of chance after this, for no swimmer could alter his course in the mad rush of water; but, just as the little fellow's head was about to sink for the third time beneath the foam-flecked waves, the hand of the daring rescuer came in contact with the child, and he was for the moment saved.

But, with all of his great strength, the swimmer was unable to make the least headway against the whirling circle of water which gradually drew him and his unconscious burden nearer its center, where it plunged downward in a rotary motion, dragging whole logs under with it. When the logs again made their appearance they would be a great distance down the stream.

Even should he escape the whirlpool, he had but one chance in a thousand of escaping being crushed to death between the logs, which struck together with a force that peeled the bark off and sent the splinters flying into his face in showers.

He was fast growing exhausted; his efforts were growing weaker and weaker, and he seemed about to sink from sight, when a great pine log was seen to strike him a fearful blow; but he managed to cling to it and climb upon it with his limp burden, one arm hanging helplessly by his side.

The huge log he is astride of is the same one which so nearly crushed the great sluice gates. The struggle between the whirlpool and the giant of the forest is tremendous. The log disappears from sight at intervals, but only for an instant. Sometimes it spins around like a top, as if trying to shake its human burden off; but, lo! just as the great log is pulled directly over the vortex for the hundredth time, the current changes for an instant, and the log is thrown with great violence clear of the whirlpool, and shoots like an arrow down the stream. The crowd looks with bated breath. Surely he must have loosened his hold that time, for no human being could have had the strength and endurance to cling to that shooting monster as it flows through a sea of foam! But he is there! in the same position, and, wonder of wonders, he still has the child!

But the danger was by no means past yet. The stream becomes narrower a few hundred feet below the dam, and there is a sharp bend in the river. Here is where the greatest danger will be. The logs had become wedged at this point and formed a jam fully forty feet in height, the high banks on either side hemmed the water until it made a cataract, over which the loose logs shot with terrible velocity.

To go over this meant to be crushed to death, and, making a desperate effort, he gained an upright position on the rolling log, holding his unconscious burden in his one good arm.

His only chance of life now lay in his being able to regain the shore before reaching the great jam. To do this he would

have to make his way by leaping from one log to another when they came close enough together. But would he be able to accomplish this before it was too late?

Less than six hundred feet intervened between himself and certain death, and the logs were moving with the speed of an express train!

Closer and closer the logs closed together as the stream became narrower, and in a short time he stood upon the nearest log, which was within six feet of the shore.

Gathering himself for a desperate effort, he leaped. But, hampered with the child, he could not quite make it, and fell into the rushing waters. But another log, rushing down from above, was soon within reach, and he managed to clamber upon it and, made his way within a few feet of the shore, when the jam was reached.

He had made an excellent fight for life, but it seemed now as if all his efforts were to be in vain.

The log, with its precious burden, was whirling tantalizingly near the shore, but just out of reach. It was now too late to plunge into the water and try to swim the few remaining feet, as he would have been swept down instantly by the under-tow and ground to death. Nearer and nearer they were swept to the fatal precipice, until the front end of the log struck the jam with a crash, swung sideways across the small opening in the center of the jam, and in an instant was swept beneath the surface, but not before James had leaped onto the tossing logs, where he made his way from one to another, now falling down on his knees, sometimes crawling on his hands and knees, amidst the blinding spray, but slowly and surely making his way to the shore and safety.

Once a giant pine, caught like a wedge, snapped in two like a jackstraw, the splinters striking him in the temple and knocking him down, while a great cry of horror went up from the watchers,—but he was up in an instant, the blood flowing down his face and into his eyes, nearly blinding him; but he was close to the shore now, and a dozen strong hands were

stretched out to render assistance, and just in time. Exhausted nature would stand no more, and he sank fainting in the arms of a brawny woodsman, his precious burden still clasped in his one strong arm.

They were tenderly carried under the shade of a great oak tree. A doctor bent over them and soon brought James to consciousness, but it was many hours before the little one could be aroused, as it had swallowed a great quantity of water.

James was found to have sustained a broken arm and many cuts and bruises, but the doctor cheerfully announced that there was no serious danger if the patient had good care and was kept quiet.

A vehicle was quickly procured, and they were removed to Mt. Vernon, James being taken directly home, and the child to the home of his parents, who proved to be one of Mr. Vernon's tenants, its father, William Manning, being the engineer in one of the saw-mills belonging to Mr. Vernon.

Our hero was confined to his bed for several weeks, and every day brought forth a visit from Marguerite Manning, the sister of the little fellow whom he had saved. She always brought a beautiful bouquet of flowers to decorate his room, and her fresh, happy young face was watched for with eagerness by the patient, because she always reminded him of the sun just peeping from behind some dark cloud.

When our hero was at last convalescent and able to be about, he found himself to be the lion of the hour. The rough, but kind-hearted, people of the little lumber city were both loud and profuse in their praises, much to the embarrassment of our modest hero.

Mary's eighteenth birthday anniversary fell on May 7th, just one month after the log-jam episode. Violet was nearly the same age, although no one knew exactly on what day her anniversary would fall; consequently they had always celebrated on the same day, and this year was to be the same as usual.

Grand preparations were made for the fête and invitations were sent to several friends in Saginaw.

CHAPTER VIII.

Down by the Old Mill Dam

While James is slowly recovering from the rough usage of the river, let us turn our attention to Frank as he leaves the Vernon residence one Thursday evening shortly after the usual evening meal was over.

We find him wending his way up town to the club of which he was president as well as its originator.

Of late he had taken to drinking quite heavily, and it was rumored around the city that he was to be seen any night in Joe McCally's gambling house, wooing the goddess of chance. It was even hinted that there was a woman's name coupled with his. He had been seen down by the river several times strolling with pretty Marguerite Manning. His visits were always made after dark, and it was predicted that no good would ever come of it.

After taking several stiff drinks of brandy and soda, and exchanging a few words with some of the members of the club, he left and made his way down to the river below the dam.

Seating himself on a fallen log, he lighted a cigar and prepared to wait for someone.

He was evidently well acquainted with the place, for, after smoking thoughtfully a few moments, he arose, went over to the butt of an old tree and thrust his hand into a hollow space within.

"Nothing there," he said, with a sigh of satisfaction. "She will be here to-night, if nothing happens."

After making this somewhat obscure remark, he again seated himself on the fallen log. He did not have to wait long, for a rustling in the underbrush was soon heard, and, without turning his head, he remarked, "Nice way to keep a fellow waiting. I ought to be up to the club even now."

"There was a time when you did not think so much of the

club," remarked the newcomer, who was no other than Marguerite Manning, the engineer's pretty daughter.

But how changed was that beautiful face now. There was an anxious, worried look on her countenance as she spoke again, saying, "Frank, you must keep your promise to me before it is too late."

"O well, of course I will," he replied, irritably. "But before I do, you must do me one favor, and then we shall go to Saginaw, hunt up a preacher and be quietly married."

"But why must we go to Saginaw? You have promised that we should be married and live here in Mt. Vernon."

"We shall live here," he replied, "but you must keep the marriage a secret for awhile yet, as it is of the utmost importance to me that you should do so; and, by the way, there is another little matter of which I wish to speak to you."

Rising and throwing away his cigar, he folded his arms about the girl whose ruin he had accomplished, and, kissing her lips, said, "Now, listen to me, dear, and, if you promise to do exactly as I tell you, we will be married in just three weeks from to-day."

The heartless young scoundrel knew exactly how to manage the poor, weak creature who had fallen a prey so easily to his oily tongue and smooth ways.

"Ah! Frank," she said, "how good it seems to have you take me in your arms as you once did. It almost makes me happy again, except when I think of the future!" And here she broke down and sobbed. The villain comforted her, stroking her hair and calling her endearing names, until she was somewhat calm again, and then he proposed his plan to her which ran as follows:

She was to attend the birthday party, and by some maneuver get James into the old grape arbor, and he (Frank) would manage to get Violet near the arbor. When this was accomplished, Marguerite was to accuse James of perpetrating her ruin and promising to marry her.

The details were carefully gone over and minutely explained

by the fiend, who, after making sure that she thoroughly understood them, asked:

"Well, dear, what do you say? Will you do it if I give you my sacred word of honor to marry you within three weeks of to-day?"

"What do I say?" she repeated, with blazing eyes. "That I would rather die than do this wicked thing. I have sunk low, very low, indeed, but I am not base enough to wreck those two lives! Do you forget that it was James who sprang into that terrible dam and rescued Brother Walter from its terrible clutches? There was no other brave enough to risk their lives but him. Even the brawny woodsmen, who are thought not to know what fear is, hung back and did not dare risk it. You were there, and in my mad fear and anguish I called on you to save him; but, coward that you are, you hung back. I tell you I would rather die than do it!"

"Then die you shall!" he cried, furiously, and, picking her up in his arms, he strode with her to the river, where he made as if to throw her in; but, thinking better of it, he let her fall to the ground and stood gloating over the half-fainting form of the girl.

"No; I will not do that," he cried. "That would be too easy. I will let you live and face the world with that unborn brat of yours."

"Have mercy!" she wailed. "It would kill me!"

"Then do as I tell you, and I will marry you to-morrow."

"Never, never! I will seek the cold water at my feet first." And, rising, she continued, "I will go to-morrow and put them on their guard, for now I know you for what you are—a base deceiver and liar, who would stop at nothing to gain your ends—not even murder."

"By heavens! you shall pay for this," said the now thoroughly-frightened and baffled man. "You shall never live to tell them the story of your downfall at my hands, and, most of all, my intentions toward Violet, for I mean to make Violet

Vernon my wife by fair means or foul! Do you know what I mean to do?" he said, with a hiss.

"I know you would do almost anything, but you shall not prevent me from telling them the truth," she cried, defiantly.

"Then die!" he shrieked, hoarsely, giving her a violent push. She staggered on the very brink of the dam, regained her balance, and would have got away safely, but the man, mad with fear at the thought of his villainy being made known to Violet, seized her roughly in his arms, and, swinging her completely off her feet, hurled her down to the cold, dark depths of the rushing mill race.

One wild scream of terror and anguish rang out upon the still night air, and then all was silence. Once a white hand was thrown above the surface of the water, grasping vainly for support, but it soon sank from sight, and nothing was left but the rushing waves of the swiftly-moving current.

The guilty man sank down, pale and haggard, on the saw dust, and wiping the perspiration from his face, looked searchingly about to see if his act had been observed by any one.

Nothing suspicious was to be seen, and no sound marred the stillness of the calm, beautiful night. The murderer arose and swiftly made his way home. Passing up the back stairway, he quickly sought his own room, and, flinging himself face downward on the bed, he tried to think of various ways to divert suspicion from himself.

"Thank heaven!" he muttered, "no one saw me, and they will probably think she accidentally fell into the water."

But he was wrong in thinking that no person saw him commit that horrible crime, for Elph, the fourteen-year-old son of Hattie (Hattie is old Aunt Lizzie's daughter, and one of the negro servants who accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Vernon from Culpepper to Michigan, it will be remembered) had been an eye-witness to all that was said and done in that fatal scene.

He had gone down to the river to fish for bull-heads, and in order that he might reach the deepest water he climbed down

the slippery sides of one of the piers of the dam, and, sitting astride of a cross timber, was busily hauling in the bull-heads, when the sound of voices reached his ear, and, looking up, he distinctly saw the forms of Frank and Marguerite. Being in the dark shadow of the dam, he could hear and see all that took place without himself being seen.

He remained perfectly quiet, observing all that took place, and when Frank hurled the unfortunate girl in the river he quickly dived after her. But the murderer had done his work well, as he had hurled her far beyond the quiet little eddy into the rushing water, and she was instantly swept down the swift current; and, try as he would, Elph was unable to find the slightest trace of her. He searched the banks on both sides far down the river, but in vain, and he finally gave up in despair.

Frank had always been cruel to him, and Elph felt the greatest fear of him. Fear kept him from running to the city and telling what he saw, and, quieting his conscience the best he could, he stole back home and crept up to his little bed in the barn, there to dream of the terrible spectacle he witnessed in the evening.

The next morning all was excitement. Marguerite, the engineer's beautiful daughter, had disappeared.

She had complained of a headache, and went to her room early in the evening, but on calling her in the morning and receiving no response, her mother opened the bed-room door and found the room empty. The snowy white bed in the corner had not been occupied. The window was open, and, crossing over to it, she looked down on the soft earth and saw the foot-prints of Marguerite, where she had lightly leaped from the window to the yielding soil. A strange sensation of mis-giving seized Mrs. Manning, and she sank to the floor with a spasm of fear; but, recovering herself, she hurriedly sent word to where Mr. Manning was working, and he hastened home.

A brief consultation was held, and it was decided to give a general alarm.

The mills closed down, and the men all joined in the search, some dragging the river and others scouring the woods, but nothing was seen or heard of her that day.

The searching parties returned in groups of twos and threes, but all had the same sad news to report:

Failure!

At daybreak the whole city was aroused; the search was renewed with more vigor than ever; searching parties were sent far down the river, but no news came until about four o'clock in the afternoon, when she was seen in a pile of drift-wood, seven miles below the dam, whither the swift current had carried her.

The beautiful face was bruised and swollen beyond all recognition from contact with the sharp rocks, and the lovely golden hair hung down her back and streamed over her face like a golden halo.

Frank, who had been the most active in the search, was the first one to discover her. He led a searching party down the river. In fact, it was by his suggestion that they searched the river further downward.

The poor girl was brought home and buried in the little cemetery on the hill, and no person was more profuse in their regrets and expressions of sorrow over the fate of the unfortunate girl than Frank Vernon.

As for Elph, he was too completely cowed by his fears of Frank to say anything of what he knew, and the verdict of the coroner was: "Death by drowning, caused by accidentally falling into the water some time between the hours of 8.00 p.m. and 7.00 a.m. on the night of April 22d, 1886."

The birthday party was postponed two months on account of the tragedy, and the fertile brain of Frank hatched up a scheme whereby he hoped to still carry out his original plans to humiliate and disgrace James in the eyes of Violet.

CHAPTER IX.

The Berision—Frank Wins

One bright morning in the early part of June, a few days before the grand ball and birthday party to be celebrated at Greenwold, the beautiful Vernon home, we find Frank in his "den," a spacious room on the second story, opening off of his bed-chamber. Looking around the richly-furnished room, we observe Frank, clad in a garnet velvet dressing-gown, and reclining in a large easy chair before the fire-place, his feet perched upon the fender, evidently taking his ease. Close to his elbow stood a small, round table, covered with a snowy linen spread, upon which was the remains of a light breakfast. Near-by, on his left, was a mahogany stand, strewn with books and magazines, but he did not appear to be in a reading mood. A cigar in his fingers, his head resting on the cushioned back of the easy chair, he was thoughtfully blowing blue rings of smoke above his head. His eyes were half closed, and he appeared to be thinking deeply.

"Yes," he muttered, "she is dead, and it is better so!" And, after a pause, "I would have had to look elsewhere for aid in any case, the obstinate little minx!"

Several minutes were passed in silence, when suddenly, with a start, he exclaimed, in a low voice:

"The very person, I believe! How is it that Susanne Rothford's name has not occurred to me before! I know that Susanne is infatuated with James, and she will be only too glad to break up the match between James and Violet. Moreover, I am well enough acquainted with Susanne to propose my plan to her and trust her to keep silent in regard to confidential matters."

Crossing the room, he sat down at his writing desk and penned the following note:

“To Miss SUSANNE ROTHFORD,
“Mt. Vernon, Mich.

“My Dear Susie:—

“I beg to request you to favor me with a few minutes’ interview, if you will be at liberty this afternoon and can spare a half hour of your valuable time, as I wish to speak to you about something of importance.

“May I hope for a favorable reply immediately?

“Sincerely yours,

“FRANK VERNON.”

“Greenwold, June 3, 1886, 10.00 a.m.”

After addressing and sealing the above missive, he pulled the bell-rope, and in a second Elph appeared.

“What can I do for you, Marse Frank?” he inquired.

“Take this message to Miss Susanne Rothford, at The Corners, and wait for a reply,” commanded Frank, handing him the envelope. “Now, be quick about it!”

Touching his cap respectfully, Elph disappeared. He was not gone very long before he returned and handed Frank a pink-tinted envelope addressed in a woman’s fine handwriting. Frank opened the envelope, drew out the note paper and read the following:

“To MR. FRANK VERNON,

“Greenwold,

“Mt. Vernon.

“Dear Friend:—

“If you will call at my home at 2.30 this p.m., I shall be at liberty to give you the audience you requested.

“Sincerely,

“S. ROTHFORD.”

“The Corners, June 3, 1886.”

“Ah ha!” muttered Frank. “I will be punctual.” Taking his watch from his vest pocket, he glanced at the time,

remarking, "I shall not be able to spend much time at the bank to-day."

Half-past two o'clock that afternoon found Frank standing on the veranda of The Corners. In response to his ring the door was opened by a very tall young man, who looked decidedly English, who wore a uniform which looked English and who spoke in a manner and voice that could not be mistaken for anything but English. He was evidently the butler, and led Frank to a small reception room, waved him to a chair, and then disappeared in response to Frank's inquiry to see Miss Rothford.

Directly a tall girl entered the room, and a clear voice pleasantly greeted him. Susanne Rothford is more than a comely-looking girl. Tall and slender, but well built, she moves about with easy grace, and there is a sprightliness as well as determination in her step which commands one's admiration. A face which was at once delicate, lovely and expressing great determination and independence, with features almost classical in outline, and a clear, ivory complexion. Framed in its coils of dark hair, it makes a pleasing face to look upon. Yet, one observing very closely the face of Susanne Rothford would discover unpleasant lines about the firmly-chiseled mouth and a certain faltering, half-cruel light lurking in the depths of her luminous dark eyes which spoke of a treacherous side to her character and warned one not to trust her too far.

Susanne led Frank to the garden, and, as they slowly walked up the rose path, he began, "Susie, I have come to confide to you my trouble and annoyance and to ask your aid, well knowing that I can trust you. You know that my brother James and Violet Vernon are about to be married, and, Susie, I love her and cannot give her up. I cannot give her up," he repeated, his eyes burning with a smoldering, passionate light, "and I am going to ask you to help me to part James and Violet. Besides," he added, with a queer little smile, "you would be interested in seeing James break faith with

Violet," speaking with a slight emphasis on the "you." A flush of pride mounted to her cheeks, and Frank hastily continued, "Susanne, if you will aid me, I will be your debtor for life, and matters will take a different turn—more to the satisfaction of both you and I."

After a few moments of silence, she asked, "Well, Frank, what is it you wish me to do, and how shall I aid you?"

"Susie, there is only one way that I can think of which would be effectual, and you will forgive me and not be offended if I speak quite plainly?"

"You may say what you wish," she replied.

"Knowing as I do Violet's loyal, true nature, I am certain there is only one way of making her look with disfavor upon her lover, and that is to make James appear dishonorable and in a worthless light to her. To accomplish this you would have to accuse James within her hearing of ruining your life, and bitterly reproach him for his heartless conduct in refusing to marry you, and then plead with him to save you from facing the world in your shame and sorrow, framing your appeals in a picture of despairing and agonizing words which will brand him as a heartless, contemptuous scoundrel, dishonorable in Violet's eyes."

Susanne's eyes flashed with pride; her lips parted as if to emit an indignant answer, but Frank, not giving her time to speak, rapidly continued:

"In a few nights there will be a grand ball at Greenwold, and everybody and everything will be gay and merry. All will go well if you will only do as I ask. After one of the dances in which James is your partner, you will request him to take you for a short walk in the garden, as you feel so faint and warm, and must have a breath of fresh air, and you will lead him to the grape arbor. You know where it is. Enter, both you and James. In a moment you'll hear footsteps approaching, as I will lead Violet down that path, and we shall hear low tones within the arbor. Presently, when we are quite near, you will accuse James as I said, and plead with

him. She will hear, and—you know the rest. Will you do it?"

Susanne's bosom rose and fell; her face was flushed, and she exclaimed, "How dare you ask me to do such a thing!"

Frank spoke slowly and calmly, saying, "And you wish to let Violet Vernon continue to be James' sweetheart, and their marriage take place serenely—the future one long blank."

"The future one long blank," he repeated, a subtle meaning in his tone, which conveyed to her the impression he desired to make, and yet not in such a way as to strike upon her nature harshly and wound her pride. Her eyes fell beneath his gaze; a change came over her face; she hesitated. When Frank spoke again of a marriage between Violet and James a look of passionate resentment flashed into her eyes.

Frank spoke again, continuing his request in a persuasive tone, firing her jealousy of Violet, until at last he gained her consent to do as he wished and part them.

After going over every part, down to the minutest detail of how it was to be carried out, Frank left her, saying, "I shall rely upon you, Susie."

Susanne walked slowly to the house and passed in at the side entrance. As she passed through the dining-room her mother entered. Their eyes met, but Susanne's turned guiltily away, and, after exchanging a few words, she passed quickly on to her room.

"What would mother think?" she whispered, as she stood by the window, meditating, and for a moment her eyes were radiant with a noble light in them, an expression of goodness and purity overspread her countenance, and she murmured, "I must not ruin their lives; let them be happy and at peace with each other."

Then, in an instant her face hardened; her eyes burned with a jealous fire. "Happy!" she repeated. "No! She shall not have him, and Susanne Rothford will stoop to conquer!"

CHAPTER X.

The Birthday Party and Ball at Greenwold

The night of the party fell clear and bright. The beautiful grounds of Greenwold were lighted up with many gorgeous-hued Japanese lanterns. Inside, the spacious rooms were decorated with trailing smilax and ferns, and tall vases filled with beautiful roses and carnations garnished the mantelpieces. The large, old-fashioned fireplaces were banked with fair white lilies, while from their holders of heavy wrought silver numerous wax candles threw their beams over the richly-decorated rooms.

Uncle Joe and Aunt Lizzie were arrayed in their best. Uncle Joe, stiff and dignified, occupied the very important position of butler and felt the full responsibility of his post.

Aunt Lizzie, dressed in her best black cashmere gown (one made from some of Mrs. Vernon's old ones), also felt the importance of her position, for did she not have full charge of the mysteries of the kitchen?

Hattie, her daughter, had charge of the ladies' dressing room, and Tobias, Hattie's husband, looked after the young men's wraps in the gentlemen's dressing room.

Elph, that young imp, was to be the chief dispenser of good things later on, but, judging from his bulging pockets, he had already dispensed with a goodly amount of Grandma Lizzie's choicest cakes and dainties. At present he was assisting his grandfather at the door, for the young couples came in groups so closely that he became slightly flabbergasted, as he expressed himself confidentially to Mary and Violet, who, radiant and fair in their dainty white muslin gowns, were assisting Mrs. Vernon in receiving the guests.

The imp's hands were a little sticky from the icing on Aunt Lizzie's cakes, and Mary sent him to the kitchen to wash his hands.

Aunt Lizzie had left her kitchen for a few minutes to come into the drawing room and see the young people arrive. Her sharp eyes spied Elph as he was slipping into the kitchen, and thinking he was going to make a raid on her treasures she immediately started in pursuit.

"See here, you dirty little black nigger," she exclaimed, trying to corner him, "I's done gwine to break youh neck if you done touch any mo'h dem cakes!"

But the imp was too quick for her. Dodging under her arm he ran out the back door, washed his hands under the hydrant, and scurried around to the front entrance. Giving the door bell a violent ring, it was opened by Uncle Joe with his most dignified bow, but he ended up with a snort of disgust upon raising his woolly head, which had been bowed down nearly on a level with the floor.

"Young nigger, what for you come into dis front door? Don't you done know dat nothing but the most spectacle white folks of dis town comin' through dat door to-night? I's done gwine to break dat black head of youhs when I gets time," which was a favorite expression of Uncle Joe's when threatening dire vengeance on the head of the imp, while the fact was, he had never struck him during the fourteen years he had acted as grandfather to Elph. It was different with Aunt Lizzie, however, for many were the spank and swat she had administered to the anatomy of that young gentleman. And he seemed to appreciate it, for no sooner did the memory of the last sting fade away than he would come back for more, which, in every case, was cheerfully given.

The guests made an adjournment to the lawn, where various games were indulged in until 10.30, when a light luncheon was served, Aunt Lizzie tastefully arranging the tempting viands while the imp passed them around, showing his delight by displaying a shiny row of ivory that would have made a society belle envious.

Aunt Lizzie was kept busy between her tasks of preparing

the viands and watching the imp, who, observing this, made many a wriggle and movement with his hands as soon as he was handed a fresh plate loaded down with dainties. His back being turned, poor old Aunt Lizzie was unable to see whether he was doing any mischief or not, but feared the worst, which caused the little scamp so much joy that he was careless and did not see Frank, who was coming through the door on some errand, and Elph ran full tilt against him, causing the contents of the plate to bespatter that young man's evening dress in a way that rendered him unfit to re-enter the room among the guests until he made a change of clothes.

Frank's violent temper was instantly aroused, and giving the imp a blow with his open hand sent him reeling against the door, causing his head to strike the sharp corner of the casing, rendering him unconscious.

With a muttered curse Frank made his way up the rear stairway to his room, where he changed his wearing apparel.

Noticing the non-appearance of Elph, James and Mary made their way toward the kitchen, where they found the poor little fellow lying unconscious upon the floor.

Both guessed the cause instantly, for they had observed Frank going in this direction, and it was by no means the first time he had done an act of this kind. Quickly raising Elph in his arms James carried him to his own room, where restoratives were applied and he was soon restored to consciousness, and related the particulars of the case to James.

In the meantime Mary returned to her guests and explained that Elph had fallen against the door and slightly injured himself, and Uncle Joe was now detailed to fill the place of the imp. Frank had made his way back, looking as cool and unconcerned as if nothing had happened to ruffle his temper.

Violet was anxious and insisted upon going to see Elph, and soon drew the whole story of the affair from him. She was deeply shocked and hurt to learn of Frank's cruelty

toward the little fellow. She had known of his abusing the poor boy before, but not in this shocking manner. After promising to come and see him again, she made her way downstairs, mingling again with her guests who had scarcely missed her from the chattering, laughing throng.

Her steady gaze met the eyes of Frank, which dropped before her scornful look, for he saw that she knew the truth about it.

Refreshments having been served, the merry throng now made their way to the ball room, where the orchestra struck up a popular air while the merry dancers whirled through the good, old-fashioned polka.

Frank and Violet danced together; James and Susanne, much to that young lady's delight, and Mary was the partner of John Wellington, a neighbor. Frank tried to open a conversation with Violet, who only answered in cold monosyllables. Losing his temper, he exclaimed hotly:

"You could talk if it were James who was dancing with you!"

This was the first time he had spoken thus to her since the scene in the grape arbor.

She was too surprised to answer for an instant, but regaining her composure, she replied, coldly, "You forget yourself, sir."

Frank could have bit his tongue off for having made this indiscreet speech, and he hastened to humbly beg her pardon, which Violet readily granted.

The dance being over Frank and Violet wended their way toward the garden, soon followed by James and Susanne, who leisurely strolled down to the old grape arbor. Susanne had suggested resting in the arbor, after the fatigue of the dance, and, unnoticed by the others, they parted the tangled vines and entered the arbor.

Frank and Violet slowly strolled among the rose bushes, the full moon throwing her radiant light upon them, the light breeze playing with Violet's golden curls. Finally,

turning down a path toward the right, they came directly before the grape arbor. Stretching out his arm, Frank touched the vines, as if to part them for Violet to enter, but she hung back, unwilling to enter in Frank's company, the memory of the scene between him and herself that had once taken place there flashing into her mind. As she stood hesitating, the low, impassioned tones of Susanne fell upon her ear. She was pleading with James to marry her before it was too late.

Throwing herself on her knees, Susanne began in wild, incoherent words to beg of James by all that was sacred not to dishonor her and her unborn babe.

James could only ejaculate, "Susanne! Susanne!" so surprised and astonished was he that he stood stupefied, listening to her wild words, thinking that she had suddenly taken leave of her senses.

The acting was perfect.

Frank chuckled to himself as Violet, with a moan of anguish, leaned heavily upon him, but spoke no word. Now was his chance, and putting his arm around her he led her away, in the direction of the house. Violet begged him to let her go to her room, and make excuses for her to the guests regarding her non-appearance.

Pressing a judicious kiss upon her brow, he murmured sorrowfully, "Poor little girl! Poor, wounded, little dove!" With well-simulated sympathy he opened the door of her room, permitting her to pass through, and closing the door after her. He then made his way to the ball room, and made excuses to the guests, saying that Violet was ill and had retired, begging the party not to mind her absence, as it was only a slight attack of headache.

Left alone, Violet threw herself on the bed, where she wept and moaned as only a trusting heart can which has been cruelly wronged and deceived.

Aunt Lizzie, hearing her darling honey bird, as she was called by that great-hearted creature, instantly made her way

to Violet's room, where she unceremoniously entered, and clasping the form of the sobbing girl in her arms, picked her up as if she was yet the baby that she had rocked in childhood.

Violet, who had always confided all her troubles to her black mammy, was strangely reticent now, and no amount of coaxing by Aunt Lizzie could get the desired information from her. At last, giving up in despair, she disrobed her young mistress, and at the urgent request of Violet left her alone to fight out love's bitter awakening.

But what of James and his strangely-acting charge.

He was completely bewildered and dumbfounded, for as soon as the footsteps of Frank and Violet died away she began laughing and crying in a manner that greatly alarmed our bewildered hero, who was about to hasten for assistance, which fact seemed to bring her instantly to herself, for she grew more calm immediately and imperiously ordered him to take her back to the house, where she at once became one of the gayest of the gay dancers.

Poor James began to half-suspect that he had been dreaming, and actually pinched himself to see whether he had not really fallen asleep while watching the dancers. But his social duties called him to himself, and he was soon whirling over the polished floor with a fair partner, whose noisy tongue caused him to half-forget the unpleasant little occurrence of the past half hour.

The absence and reported slight indisposition of Violet caused him much worry, however, as he knew that nothing but a serious illness could keep her from her guests, and he was glad when the fête was at last over and the last guest had departed.

Frank and James met at the foot of the stairs as they were about to go to their rooms.

The former seemed to be in the best of spirits, and jovially punched James in the ribs, remarking that he looked more as if he had just come from a funeral than a birthday party.

James answered rather coldly, and his brother laughed and replied:

"Oh, well, old man, you have not entirely recovered from your recent struggle in the log jam and are tired out after the fatiguing events of the day. Now go to bed and get a good rest and you will be your old self in the morning."

"By the by, brother," said Frank, as they were about to part for the night, after ascending the stairs, "better come into my room and get a sip of brandy; it will brace you up wonderfully."

"No, thank you," replied James; "I advise you not to take so many bracers, either."

Frank had come home slightly under the influence of liquor several times of late, but always managed to conceal this fact from all but the imp, who, being out at all times of the night, had confidentially imparted the secret to James, after extracting a promise from him not to inform any one where he got his information.

James went up to Elph's little room in the attic to see how the little fellow was getting along. He found the imp curled up in his bed, having sobbed himself to sleep, the white bandage across his forehead, soaked with red blood, forming a strong contrast with his black face; and a feeling came into James' heart for an instant which had never been there before. But it lasted an instant only, as, remembering his brother's hot, passionate nature, he felt only sorrow for him, forgetting his faults and thinking only of his virtues. But could he have known of the dark, treacherous trick played upon himself and Violet by the plotters, which was to wreck two loving hearts and send a third to a fate far worse than death, his feelings would have been far different.

Ah, could he have but known! How much suffering and misery would have been avoided, how many loving hearts would have been spared many an unhappy hour in the future!

But it is not for us poor mortals of earth to see into the hidden future.

CHAPTER XI.

The Broken Engagement

The next day Violet was too ill to leave her room and a doctor was called. He pronounced it to be a case of nervous prostration, and gave orders that all persons be kept out of the room except the nurses, saying that she needed perfect quiet, as there was danger of brain fever setting in.

But, thanks to her vigorous, young constitution, she was soon up again, but how changed from the laughing, merry-hearted, blue-eyed little girl of a few weeks ago. No merry laughter rang through the house now. She avoided James on all occasions. He tried desperately to obtain an interview with her, but she always met him with the plea of being too tired, or ill, or else Frank was on hand to prevent it, fearing lest they should talk together, Violet reproach him for his falsity, and an explanation follow which would have been exceedingly embarrassing for Frank, as well as upsetting all of his well-laid plans.

The sharp eyes of Mrs. Vernon detected the greater part of this by-play, but she never once dreamed of the dark, treacherous depths to which Frank was capable of descending.

As time went on James became desperate and resolved to seek an interview with Violet, whether or no. Meeting her quite unexpectedly in the garden one afternoon, he stood directly in her path as she essayed to pass him.

"Violet, why do you avoid me?" he asked, reproachfully; and taking her gently but firmly by the arm he led her to the old grape arbor which had been the scene of their betrothal, and now the fatal place where it would soon be broken.

Seating her on a rustic bench, James sat down beside her

and repeated his question before receiving an answer from those quivering lips, for whose owner he would have given his very life to spare one moment's pain or suffering.

"Oh, James, how could you have done it?" she tearfully said; "and I loved you so, believing you to be the very soul of honor and fidelity."

"What can you possibly mean?" asked the bewildered and astonished James.

"Can you ask me that?" indignantly exclaimed Violet. "Why, I saw and heard it all myself, though quite by accident."

James was more puzzled than ever to know her meaning. The unpleasant little incident in the arbor on the night of the party had quite escaped his memory. The strange behavior of Violet had crowded out everything else.

Violet was growing stronger now, her indignation getting the better of her naturally timid and loving nature. It is thus that we oftentimes find the most timid natures the strongest when put to the extreme test, and so it was thus with Violet.

What she deemed his utter baseness was bad enough, but to add deceit to guilt and wrongdoing was too much and taking the engagement ring from her finger she flung it at his feet, saying, "Go give it to the girl to whom it rightfully belongs, and at least make what reparation you can while there is yet time."

A light was breaking over the bewildered mind of James at last, and he exclaimed, "Were you here that night and heard that poor misguided girl's wild words?"

"Yes, I was here on the scene, very fortunately, in time to hear the greater part of that disgraceful interview," she scornfully replied, "and you must make full reparation to her. Is not ruining that poor girl enough? Would you still seek to link my life with yours, despicable man that you are?"

"Oh, Violet, I have not deserved this! Would you let the

wild, incomprehensible words of a half-mad girl wreck our two lives?" he asked, sorrowfully.

"Don't try to deceive me, sir!" she exclaimed. "No one could have made me believe that the brave lover to whom I had given my love, aye, my very life, could have been so utterly false and base."

"Violet, you cannot, shall not, spoil both of our lives because of the wild, senseless words of that girl. I was entirely ignorant of what was to take place and of her false accusations when I came here with her."

"So it seems," she replied, ironically, "or you would have deferred the interview to some other time and at a place not quite so public. You are evidently quite an adept in arranging secret meetings, for no one has ever known of your clandestine meetings with your sweetheart of whom you now seem heartily tired. I wonder how many times you have held her in your arms, whispering words of tender devotion and promising to always love and cherish her? More times than you have me, no doubt. James, don't make me despise as well as hate you. If I kept my promise to marry you, you would soon tire of me as you have of that other unfortunate girl."

"As for your accusation," replied James, "I can prove that it is utterly false. Hate me if you will, for I cannot prevent you, but despise me you never can, for I am an honorable man among men," and throwing his sturdy shoulders back he folded his arms and stood proudly before her. The sinewy cords working with the excess of his emotion, he looked the very picture of the king of men, and had he made but one more appeal then Violet would have fallen in his arms, believing him against the very evidence of her own senses.

But he made none, and walking out of the arbor he turned and said, "Some day, when it is too late, you will learn of the cruel injustice you have done me as well as yourself."

Without another word he quickly faced the other way and strode rapidly in the direction of the house.

Violet sank back upon the seat from which she had risen, all her strength and courage ebbing away as her lover disappeared from view. Covering her face with her hands, she burst into such bitter tears as fall only when the heart is broken.

"James, James, come back!" she wailed in grief and despair, and could he have but heard those heart-breaking words all barriers would have been swept aside, all explained and forgiven, but, alas, he was far out of hearing, and the next time he was to look upon her beautiful face she would be the wife of another.

That evening James announced his intention of resigning his position and going to Ann Arbor, there to learn the medical profession.

The whole family, outside of Mr. Vernon, understood perfectly well why he was going to leave. The latter could not see the tragedy that was taking place in his own home. He pleaded, scolded and threatened, all in vain. James was determined to go, and his father finally gave in, and Tuesday, one week after the engagement was broken, was the date specified for his departure for Ann Arbor.

Violet did not appear at the supper table on the night preceding his departure, neither did she put in an appearance at the breakfast table the next morning, although all the rest of the family arose and breakfasted together and escorted him to the 6.30 train. Frank was profuse in expressing his regrets at parting with him, which caused the imp to grunt with disgust and resolve to keep a closer eye on "Marse Frank," for James' sake.

Catching sight of the imp's sharp, ferret-like eyes fastened upon his face, Frank growled in an undertone for him to make himself scarce, or it would be the worse for his black hide when he caught him in the barn.

The words were not spoken so low but that James heard them, and turning to his brother he said, "Frank, let the little fellow remain. Can you not see that he misses me as much as the rest?"

"Oh, well, let him remain if he wants to," replied Frank, carelessly, but giving the imp a black look which boded no good for that youngster later on. But Elph did not notice the look, being too busy with his present sorrows to think of the future, and had he done so it would have made no difference, as he was always on the alert when Frank was around.

The train finally steamed up, the last good-byes were said, and James was fairly launched upon the road to his career as a physician. His mother was the last to wave her handkerchief, as the train slowly pulled out of the station, and wish her boy God-speed and success.

It was with a sinking heart that he watched the old familiar landmarks fade from view, and a strange foreboding of evil hung heavily upon him which he was unable to shake off.

The sad parting with Violet troubled him not a little, and he wondered what the outcome would be, little dreaming of the terrible events to take place in a short time after his departure.

Ann Arbor was reached about noon, and James went at once to his hotel. He was kept busy the rest of the day looking after his luggage and straightening up and arranging his room.

CHAPTER XII.

The Dove in the Eagle's Nest

While James is beginning his college career let us return again to Mt. Vernon.

His departure gave Frank a savage kind of joy that was more like a wild beast's pleasure than a human being's, and he resolved to take good care that no communication passed between them.

Violet tried to hide her aching heart from the world by assuming a forced gayety. She attended the theaters and balls and was the life and light of every party, and no one ever guessed her secret outside of the immediate family. Mr. Vernon's eyes were opened to the truth at last, and he was grieved to the heart.

Frank was ever at her side and accompanied her everywhere, but he was far too wise to speak a word of love to her yet, contenting himself by merely being her escort. He bided his time and laid a snare whereby he hoped to make Violet his wife and stop forever all danger of a reconciliation between James and Violet. Susanne had served him so well that he resolved to seek her aid again, and accordingly set himself to watch her movements, and when she left her home one afternoon to do some shopping uptown (it must be remembered that Mt. Vernon was but a small city, and its inhabitants usually walked to the business center), he managed to overtake her as if by accident. Raising his hat, he politely saluted her, suavely inquiring after her health. Susanne greeted him, and at once guessed that he had some object in view. Some few moments were passed, and commonplace remarks exchanged, Frank walking by her side. Finally Susanne asked abruptly, "Frank, what new scheme is it that you now have in mind?"

"Ah, Susie!" he exclaimed, "how refreshingly plain you are! You make my task so much easier."

"Out with it, then! And if you have any plans as good as the last, you may count on my aid."

They turned into a side street, where there was less chance of being interrupted, and Frank unfolded his plot, which was as follows:

Susanne was to go to Violet and tell her the same tale that had been told in the grape arbor on the night of the party, and ask Violet's advice as to what course to pursue. They well knew that Violet would advise her to go to James and implore him to marry her. Susanne was to apparently follow Violet's advice, but in reality go on a visit to some relatives in Jackson City. She was to remain a few days, and then return and tell Violet that he had scorned and laughed at her appeals, saying that he meant to marry Violet in a few months.

This, as a matter of course, would harden Violet's heart toward him, and he (Frank) would manage to ask her to be his wife while she was yet angry.

Upon being informed that Violet was alone almost any afternoon, Susanne promised Frank she would call upon her the following day, and then they parted, Frank retracing his steps in the direction of the bank, while Susanne headed for the one department store the town boasted of.

The next afternoon fell clear and bright. Susanne stood in a flood of sunlight on the veranda of The Corners, stylishly clad in a dainty gown of white. Lifting her white silk sunshade, she walked over to Greenwold, the distance being hardly long enough to make it necessary to order the carriage.

Arriving at the Vernon home, her ring was answered by old Uncle Joe, and Susanne asked to see Miss Violet. Violet came down, looking very sweet in her negligée of white silk and lace. After greetings were exchanged, Susanne said, "Violet, will you kindly grant me an interview in some secluded place, where there is no danger of interruption?"

Violet kindly assented, and led her upstairs to her room and closed and locked the door against all intrusion.

"Violet," began Susanne, "I am so miserable and unhappy. I have no dear, kind sister at home, nor any trusted friend to whom I feel as if I could tell my trouble and ask advice, and I would rather die than to tell my mother. So you will pardon me for coming to you, and bear kindly with me, will you not, dear Violet?"

Violet looked kindly at her. She spoke the words so sincerely that Violet's heart was touched, and there was pity in her gaze. Susanne continued:

"You are such a good, sweet girl, Violet; you are so kind and generous-hearted toward others, and I know how thoroughly trustworthy you are in keeping faith with others, and, knowing that my secret would never pass your lips, is it any wonder that I was tempted to come to you for counsel and advice? Besides, Violet, what young girl in this city have I known longer or could trust more than you?"

Susanne covered her face with her hands, and her form trembled as with an excess of emotion, while she let her head droop a little, lightly touching Violet's shoulder. Violet laid her hand gently on Susanne's brown hair and spoke softly, saying in a sympathetic voice, "My poor girl! Do not be afraid to tell me all, and if my sympathy will give you a slight consolation, you have it all."

Thus encouraged, Susanne lifted her dark eyes to Violet's, and, with many tears and sobs, recited the story of her wrongdoing and of her grief and anguish, begging Violet to more pity than blame her, she had suffered so much. When she came to James' name, Violet's face turned white, her eyes became hard and stern for an instant, and she pressed her hands tightly together. With an effort, she controlled her emotion and forced herself to speak calmly to Susanne, advising her to go to Ann Arbor and interview James at once and implore him to save her honor and marry her immediately.

At last, after gaining a promise from Violet to divulge her

secret to no one, she took her departure, Violet expressing her sympathy and kind offers of help in any way that she might be able to render her assistance.

Walking slowly homeward, Susanne was revolving in her mind the balance of her plan of campaign, a slow, sarcastic smile flitting over her lips as she thoughtfully read the address on a slip of white paper which Violet had given her, murmuring aloud, "James Vernon, Esq., The Calumet House, Ann Arbor, Michigan." "Yes," she continued, her smile broadening; "I'll go to Ann Arbor, but I don't think I shall present myself at The Calumet House, nor inquire for Mr. James Vernon. I will tell mother to-night," she mused, "that I am going to take to-morrow afternoon's train for Ann Arbor and expect to spend a few days there with my old chum, Henrietta Valentine, who wrote me to meet her there on Saturday morning and stay over Sunday with her to attend the special opening service of the Church of the Redeemer, after which she would return to her father's farm in Monroe County, and I to The Corners. I am quite sure that mother and father will not oppose my going nor question me too closely. They always let me have my own way. Then I think I had better go to Ann Arbor instead of Jackson City. I can engage a room at some hotel and stay in closely for a few days. It might prove embarrassing for me afterward should Aunt Emma refer to my visit there and ma should find that I went there, when I told her I was going to Ann Arbor, and it is best to tell ma that I am going to the same place as Violet thinks I am bound for."

Thinking thus, she finally reached home, and that evening made her excuses to her parents for her visit to Ann Arbor.

The next day Susanne hurriedly made the necessary preparations for her journey, and, dressed in a neat, black traveling suit, and carrying a small grip in her hand, she wended her way to the depot to board the four p.m. train. She had not more than reached the station platform when her eye fell on a tidy little phaeton approaching, its sole occu-

pant being Violet herself, who was driving her special pets, a pair of beautiful little Shetland ponies. Violet quickly drove up to her side, and the two girls had barely time to exchange good-byes before Susanne was obliged to board the train which in a moment was puffing out of the station.

On the fifth day after her departure Susanne returned to Mt. Vernon, reaching the town about 9.00 a.m. As she was walking up the street which led to her home, she met Frank Vernon, who greeted her cordially, and pleasantly inquired how she had enjoyed herself. She sarcastically replied that Ann Arbor was a very pretty place, but she had to imagine what the most of it looked like. Saying that she was ready to play the rest of her little part, and wishing him success, she started to proceed on her way, but was stopped by Frank, saying:

"Susie, all the folks at home are going to attend a large social function this evening, but I hardly think Violet will go. If she doesn't, I will skip over early in the evening to let you know, and you go over to interview her to-night, will you?"

"Yes, Frank," she answered, "I might as well go to-night as any time."

With these words she left him and proceeded on her way homeward.

Everything favored their plans. That evening at the supper table Violet excused herself from accompanying the family, saying that she was tired and did not feel well from the effects of a slight cold she had taken the night before while at the Grandon's ball.

Frank told his father that he wished to work over his books at the bank that evening, and soon after supper called on Susanne and informed her that Violet would be alone during the evening. She was to call on Violet, tell her of her reception at James' hands, declare that she meant to kill herself and then depart, leaving the coast clear for Frank.

She felt there was no chance of winning James herself, but

she took a fierce delight in torturing and making trouble for the girl whom she felt had always stood between them.

The clock struck eight, and Violet sat alone in the drawing-room. She was seated in an easy rocker, her head resting on her hand and thinking so deeply that she did not hear the ring of the door-bell. The second peal aroused her, and she answered the summons. Flinging back the door, she exclaimed, "Ah, Susanne! So you have returned."

"Yes, and with such despairing tidings," she murmured, in a low voice, as Violet sank on the sofa. Susanne threw aside her wrap and seated herself on a low stool at Violet's feet.

"Ah, Violet, what is there left for me to do but to die!" she said in a low, quivering voice, letting her head rest lightly against Violet's knee. "My God!" she went on. "I cannot bear it! Have I sinned so that I must needs suffer and drain the cup of sorrow to its very dregs? Do I deserve to be put so completely aside, no grain of justice must be meted out to me? He is cruel! cruel! shamefully cruel!"

"How did he receive you?" asked Violet mechanically, her voice dry and hard.

"How did he receive me! Yes, indeed, how *did* he receive me? Unfeeling wretch! He who once pretended that he loved me received me with ridicule for seeking him at Ann Arbor, and laughed at my appeals."

Violet sat looking straight before her, a great pain tugging at her heartstrings. It was so hard to really condemn the man she had loved so well. But Violet's nature was an ardent worshipper of straightforwardness, loyalty and constancy in a human being, and nothing shocked her sensitive nature so much nor could so thoroughly call up her anger and contempt for a person as the act of perpetrating or helping to bring sorrow and distress upon another person and then being disloyal and deserting his victim, leaving them to face their despair alone. Slowly an armor of steel was encircling her

heart, and she looked pityingly into Susanne's tear-stained eyes denouncing James bitterly.

"Yes," repeated Susanne tremulously, her bosom rising and falling rapidly; "to ridicule me and laugh at my appeals; to have the utter heartlessness to order me from his presence, saying that he meant to marry Violet Vernon within a few months!"

Susanne had risen, and at these words a flash of anger leaped from Violet's eyes as she sprang from her chair and stood facing Susanne. "Marry me, indeed!" she exclaimed, her voice full of contempt, while her whole form trembled with pride and anger. "We shall see how near his disgusting boasts come to the truth."

With a gesture of despair, Susanne said, brokenly, "Ah, Violet, we have both been deceived. Your awakening is very nearly as bitter as mine, and I dare say you suffer about as much as I do." She took a few steps forward, which brought her near the door. Turning, she lifted her dark, expressive eyes to Violet's and said, tremulously, "Ah, well, there is nothing for me to live for now, and I cannot face the world much longer, and I will never live to face disgrace. I swear that before many days pass over my head I shall seek relief in death, and the only course to pursue is to kill myself. Farewell!"

She passed quickly through the door, closing it behind her.

The stage remained minus a fine actress as long as Susanne Rothford did not appear upon it.

Frank was waiting in the garden nearby, and when he saw Susanne retreating down the path he hastily made his way to the house, where he found Violet sitting on a couch gazing straight before her, a hard, set look upon her face, which Frank had never seen there before, and he was really afraid of her for a moment, but muttering, "Now or never," he sat down beside her, and, taking her hand, he began:

"Violet, I forgot some papers and returned for them.

And I met Susanne as she was leaving the house. Of course, I cannot but guess as to the import of her visit, and I feel so sorry for you both. Who would have believed that my beloved brother would have turned out to be such a villain? It nearly breaks my heart, and it is killing you!"

"You need not fear for me," she said, in a hard voice. "I shall not let it trouble me!"

"Oh, the villain! to ruin that poor girl's life and then laugh at her appeals for justice!"

"I hate him! hate him! hate him! But he shall see that I am not breaking my heart over his falsity," Violet said, passionately.

"Frank," she exclaimed, recklessly, "you once asked me to be your wife, and I refused; but I have changed my mind now, and if you still desire me to marry you, knowing as you do where my heart lies, I will be your wife."

The villain's heart gave an exultant bound, and he hid his face in his hands to conceal the malicious smile that overspread his countenance when he heard her utter those words. Still keeping his face averted, he said in a hypocritical voice, "Violet, are you quite sure that you know what you are saying?"

"Yes, quite sure," she affirmed, speaking in the same hard tone. "If you wish me to marry you I will do so, providing the marriage takes place immediately."

That was just what the young scoundrel wanted above all things, for he was afraid that she would change her mind after reflecting the matter over.

Taking her hand, he said, "Violet, you have made me the happiest man on earth to-night."

Receiving no answer, he ventured to put his arm around her slender form and attempted to kiss her, but she drew away with a shudder, and he arose muttering, "Never mind, my haughty lady; my turn will come when we are married, and then you shall pay dearly for every repulse I have met at your hands. Aloud he said, "I will leave you now, dearest, for you

are tired, and had better retire and get a good night's rest." Passing through the door, he murmured, "Good-night, dear."

"Good-night," she replied absently.

When he had gone, she arose and went to her own apartments and threw herself on the bed without disrobing, but sleep did not visit her eyes that night. Poor, deceived Violet! Could you have but known the misery your rash act was to inflict upon yourself and the noble man who loved you, what a different ending would this tale have had!

Frank was astir early the next morning, contrary to his usual custom, and at breakfast announced that he and Violet would be married that afternoon and start on their honeymoon trip at 4.00 p.m. The family was struck speechless with surprise, but Frank was bubbling over with joy and merriment and laughed and joked at their astonishment. He went to the bank to make the necessary arrangements for his departure, and then went forth to engage the services of a minister. In those days there was no such formality as the marriage license.

Violet did not appear until later in the forenoon. Her cheeks were flushed and there was an unwonted brilliancy in her eyes. She apologized for the abruptness of their marriage, saying that they had made up their minds quite suddenly.

Poor Mrs. Vernon suspected all was not right, but she was powerless and could do nothing. It was with a heavy heart that she set about making the preparations for the forthcoming wedding. Mary was more outspoken, and declared she believed they were both crazy, but Frank only laughed at her. He could afford to be forgiving now. The game was as good as won. Mr. Vernon said nothing. It had always been his dearest wish that James and Violet would some day be united in marriage, and it had never entered his mind that she and Frank would ever bear that relationship to each other. He was greatly puzzled at the rapid changes which were taking place of late, but was powerless as was Mrs. Vernon to do anything in regard to them.

The ceremony took place at 3.00 p.m., and no person outside of the immediate family, and the servants, who retired to a far corner of the drawing-room, witnessed it. Mr. Vernon gave the bride away, and Mary acted as bridesmaid, much against her will.

Elph refused to be present at all, and upon learning of the forthcoming marriage he hurried away to the woods and did not put in an appearance for three days, loyal little fellow to James that he was!

Violet was as pale as death, and her responses were so low and tremulous that the man of God had to bend his head to catch her words. When the words, "Do you promise to love, honor and obey?" were reached, she faltered and would have fallen, but Frank sustained her, saying in an undertone, "Don't be a fool!"

She aroused herself with an effort and managed to go through the rest of the ceremony without faltering, and in a few minutes they were being whirled toward the depot.

They visited several of the Western States, even penetrating to far west Colorado, but even the lofty Rocky Mountains of that beautiful State had no interest for her, and nothing seemed to be able to arouse her out of her apathy. Frank tried every means to arouse her, but made a dismal failure of it, and finally, losing patience, he grew sulky and started for home. There a beautiful little cottage overlooking the river had been prepared for them by Mr. and Mrs. Vernon.

Mrs. Vernon had arranged the interior with her own hands, Mary refusing to have anything whatever to do with it, saying it was a shame the way Violet had treated James. Her mother remonstrated with her, but Mary was stubborn, and firmly stood her ground, and she finally gave up, and with a sigh said, "Well, I hope all will come right in the end."

Mary, with a disdainful shrug of her shapely shoulders, remarked, "It is all wrong from beginning to end, and there is a mystery here which I mean to solve."

Frank's parents and his sister were at the depot to meet

them on their return, and they immediately escorted them to their new home.

The travelers laid aside their wraps and baggage, refreshed themselves by a thorough application of soap and water and a touch of eau de cologne, after brushing well their dusty garments, and then repaired to the beautifully-appointed little drawing-room. The family group had conversed but a few moments when the folding doors of the dining-room were thrown open, and Aunt Lizzie's shining face smiled at them from the archway. With a courtesy to Frank and Violet, she said:

"Welcome, Marse Frank and Missy Violet, and Ise indeed very glad to see you home again safe and well. Ole Missy Vernon desired to have youse eat yuh first meal upon arriving in de town in yuh new home, and I done spec'ally requested the pleasure of preparing it for yuh. Will yuh please to come dis way?" waving her hand toward the dining-room, "and also the rest of the party, and partake of my pooh efforts?"

Violet took her old mammy's hand and thanked her warmly for her kind thoughtfulness, and Frank smiled at her and thanked her kindly. Frank and Violet then led the way into the dining-room, and the party seated themselves at the splendidly-arrayed table, which shone with silver and cut glass. The decorations were simple, but beautiful, and were in purple and white. The center piece was a beautiful "Hearts and Flowers" done in violets. On either end of the table stood tall vases of lovely white roses, exhaling their delicate perfume around the room. The little party did ample justice to the dainty, appetizing viands which Aunt Lizzie placed before them.

When luncheon was over Mr. Vernon showed them about the house, and both Frank and Violet admired the tastefully and well-appointed rooms.

Upon coming to the window overlooking the old dam, he called his son's attention to the picturesque view.

As Frank looked upon that scene a vision of a girl pleading

for life, love and justice arose in his mind, and then the wild, horrible struggle on the brink of the rushing waters, followed by a sickening splash and then—silence!

With a sickening sense of guilt and fear, he sank into a chair. Mr. Vernon quickly sprang to his side, saying, "What is the matter, my son? Are you ill?"

"No! no! it is nothing; only a dizziness caused by my long journey on the train." Recovering himself with an effort, he stepped out on the veranda with his father and made a pretense of admiring the beautiful lawns.

They soon took their leave, believing that Frank was tired out and needed rest, and in truth they both did.

It was decided that Hattie and Tobias should live with Frank, Hattie to do the cooking and Tobias to be man of all work, and Mrs. Vernon employ white persons to fill their places in her establishment.

As soon as they were alone Frank put his arms about Violet, saying, "Welcome home, little wife, and may our home be a peaceful and happy one."

For the first time a feeling of tenderness toward Frank entered her heart, and she put her arms around his neck and said, "Frank, I will try to make our home a happy one!"

A look of joy overspread his face, for, with all his faults, he loved her, loved her madly with a love that was fatal to him and all who came between them.

For the first time she noticed how pale he had grown of late, and her conscience smote her. "How he loves me," she mused to herself. "I am now his wife and I will try to make him as happy as I can."

Ah! could she have but known that his paleness was caused by fear as the memory of that fatal April night came rushing to his mind. Not that he had ever forgotten! Ofttimes in the midst of his slumbers he would start up with a shudder of fear, that last wild cry of Marguerite ringing in his ears.

CHAPTER XIII.

College Life

With the reader's kind permission we will leave Frank and Violet to begin their wedded life in peace while we once more take up the thread of James' career as he enters college.

His prowess as an athlete was well known, as he had taken part in several contests in various parts of the State before entering college.

He had little heart left for sports now, but there was no chance to escape from it, and he was elected captain of the baseball team, and his pitching soon made him the pet and pride of the University.

A rival team from the University of Ohio had won the pennant for the past two years. Wilford Ellis, an Ohio student, and a famous athlete, had been the cause of the Ohio team winning all the games for the past two years. This was his last year at college, and he determined to finish his college career with the greatest victory he had yet achieved, and it must be confessed that things did look pretty blue for Ann Arbor until James arrived. His pitching was the marvel of the University, and the hopes of all were built upon his skill with the ball. "Vernon," they would say, "will surely set us up straight this time."

Both colleges determined to make a supreme effort to win the pennant this year, and the series of games scheduled to take place promised to be the most exciting in the history of the Universities.

On the same day that James was elected captain of the baseball team Frank and Violet were united in marriage. As he proudly led his team to the diamond for the first time he little dreamed that his little lost sweetheart at home was

at that very hour breathing the solemn vows which made her the bride of another.

A few days later a newspaper clipping announcing the marriage of Frank and Violet was sent him by his father, not one of the family having the courage to pen the bitter words themselves. Had a bolt of lightning fallen from a clear sky he could not have been more surprised, and the news utterly crushed that proud spirit.

He had not even dreamed that Violet would do such a thing, although he was well aware that she believed him to be false to her. Many a sleepless night he spent after reading that fatal bit of newspaper clipping, which meant so much to him, severing him forever from the woman who was all the world to him.

There were many strangers in the city trying to get a glimpse of the great pitcher at work.

Old baseball fans had at first laughed at the idea of the junior being pitted against the seasoned veteran of three years, but the two previous games had opened their eyes and betting was at fever height. It started out at three to one in favor of the Ohio team, but on the day of the great game it dropped to even money, so confident were the followers of each team.

The faculty forbade any wagers being made on the ball grounds, but plenty of bets were made in spite of the precautions.

The city of Mt. Vernon was nearly depopulated on the day of the great ball game. A general holiday was declared, and everybody went who could raise the carfare. James had been a universal favorite at home, and they all went to cheer him on to victory.

Such a thing as defeat was not to be tolerated in Mt. Vernon, and any one daring to venture an opinion otherwise was in danger of sustaining great bodily harm.

Elph was James' most ardent admirer, and it would not

have been safe to mention defeat in that young gentleman's presence.

All the Vernon family went, including Uncle Joe, Aunt Lizzie, Tobias, Hattie, and the imp as a matter of course. He would have gone if he had been obliged to have walked all the way. But that young gentleman had shown an unusual zeal in fishing of late, and he had saved up about seven dollars, which was bet in Ann Arbor at even money with a colored barber of Ohio, a great admirer of Wilford Ellis.

Frank had to go and take Violet, of course; but it was with a wish to see James defeated and humiliated in her eyes that he went.

Since their marriage they had been drifting steadily apart, in spite of all Violet's good resolutions to be a true wife to him in every sense of the word and make him happy. She tried, God knows how hard, but it was impossible, and her indifference aroused all of his old-time jealousy of his brother, and they quarreled openly several times, Frank accusing her of still loving her false lover, which Violet neither affirmed nor denied.

Several times, when under the influence of liquor, which was often of late, he threatened to strike her, but there was a calm, quiet dignity about her which warned him not to go too far.

What Violet's feelings were, at the prospect of going to Ann Arbor, can be better imagined than described. The mad desire to see him, and the mingling of fear and dread lest she should break down entirely, entertaining the decision not to go, struggled for supremacy in her bosom. A few remarks made by her husband while intoxicated, and his strange fright at times, had caused her to half believe she had fallen the victim of a vile plot, and she bitterly reproached herself for promising to become his wife against all her better nature and woman's instinct; but Frank had

played his cards well and she was cleverly trapped and now helpless, for they had been married nearly seven months and she was soon to become a mother.

The Mt. Vernon train arrived at Ann Arbor at 11.30 a.m., on the day of the great game, and James was at the depot to meet them. With a steady voice he congratulated Frank and Violet, and wished them much happiness.

Frank was equal to the occasion, and placing his arm about the waist of Violet, said with a smile, "We are as happy as two doves, are we not, little wife?" The movement caused a spasm of pain to shoot through the heart of poor James. She looked so pale and wan, unconsciously repelling the advances of Frank. Ah, how different had she looked when his arms had been about her hundreds of times in the past, a past which is but a dream now, and the bitter awakening only just beginning to make itself felt to both of those loving hearts, which by every law of nature should have been united.

She looked so white and ill James feared she was going to faint, and he was about to hasten for a glass of water when his brother stopped him, saying that the attack was momentarily caused by her somewhat poor health of late, and the excitement of the journey and game was a little too much for her. "With a little rest," he remarked, "she will be all right and able to cheer with the rest of them for the victory of Ann Arbor." But under his breath he muttered a deep curse, wishing the defeat of his brother and devoutly hoping he would somehow manage to break his neck in the coming scrimmage.

The party repaired to a hotel, when dinner was partaken of, and then went to the ball grounds, where a little preliminary practice was done by both teams before the game was called.

During a lull in the practice James made his way to the grand stand, where they were sitting. Frank opened the discourse by saying that after seeing the rival team it was his

candid opinion the Michigan team did not stand the ghost of a show, which only caused James to smile and say, "Wait."

Frank's remark seemed to anger Violet, who aroused herself from her usual indifference long enough to say:

"He has never been defeated in a contest yet, and I would stake my very life that he won't be this time!"

James said nothing, but the look in his eyes as they met hers seemed to say, "I have lost the one great contest that made life worth living." But the thought that he still held a small share of her confidence made him resolve to win in spite of the heavy odds which he knew were against him.

Frank said lightly, although there was a dangerous gleam in his eyes, "I have not heard you speak so enthusiastically for several months upon any subject."

Her old-time spirits seemed to return, and she exclaimed, "Who is there here that is not enthusiastic? Is this not the day when Michigan shall do herself proud, and who but our dear Jimmie shall lead them on to victory?"

"Hurrah for Ann Arbor!" shouted little Elph, rising in his seat, unable to keep still any longer. The shout was taken up by the rooters of the Michigan University, and a defiant shout was hurled back from the ranks of the Ohio supporters.

Seeing the impression the imp had made on the crowd, Mr. Vernon raised him up at arm's length, telling him to hurrah for Michigan again.

This caused a great shout to go up of "The mascot! the mascot!" and instantly a dozen eager hands were raised to catch the imp and hurry him off to a seat of honor. The pennant was placed in his hands, which he took as a matter of course, and seemed to feel the full importance of his position. He did not forget to turn around and grin sardonically at Aunt Lizzie, however. That old lady was too wrought up now, however, to let such a trifle ruffle her feelings, and seemed glad to see the imp at the post of honor.

"Rubbish," muttered Frank, contemptuously, under his breath, but not so low as to escape the sharp ears of Mary, who said:

"Why, brother, you act as if you really wanted to see our team defeated."

"Nonsense," replied Frank. "Of course, I want them to win, but this tomfoolery positively makes me sick."

"Well, it don't me," said Violet, "and I mean to cheer myself hoarse every time the Michigan team scores."

"Well, you will be spared the suffering of much hoarseness, then, for if I am not mistaken they will not be able to make a single score against that great, strong team from Ohio. Why, every man of them outweighs the Michigan team by at least several pounds, and they've got the best pitcher in the country."

"Pardon me," said Violet; "that is simply a matter of opinion, which will be decided in a very short while. For my part, I think James made by far the best showing in the exercise a short while ago."

"You are wilfully blind to-day," said Frank, savagely, losing all self-control, and a scene was probably narrowly averted by the umpire calling time.

Short speeches were made by the presidents of both Universities, and the game opened up with the Ohio team in the field and the home team at the bat.

The ball whizzed over the plate with the speed of a veritable cannon ball, and one batter after another was struck out in quick succession by the champion of Ohio. A prolonged "Ah!" went up from the Ohio delegation as each batter resumed his seat and another quickly took his place.

Three men were struck at the plate without a single hit, which caused a great shout of laughter and derision from the rival rooters, but it was answered as defiantly as ever by the home team, although some began to look a little glum.

As the teams changed places, and James took his place in the box, the imp arose and delivered the following speech:

"Ladies and gentlemen, Marse Jimmie will now give you an exhibition of his wonderful pitching, which will consist of putting nine balls directly over the plate and not letting any of the batters to strike them, which action will be an exact duplicate of what Marse Will has just done."

The last speech of the imp simply brought the house down. It caused the whole audience to be convulsed with laughter, and a large, black-whiskered man in the crowd shouted out:

"You little black cuss, if he can do that times enough to win this game, I'll buy you the best suit of clothes in Ann Arbor. I have two thousand dollars bet that Ann Arbor wins."

"Well, dat am my suit of clothes all right 'nough," returned the imp, as if the matter was already settled and he was strutting about the streets of Mt. Vernon showing his trophy of the ball game.

"Play ball," shouted the umpire at this point, putting a stop to further conversation.

The eyes of James wandered over the vast throng in the grand stand and met those of Violet, fixed upon him with a look that made him forget she now belonged to another. A little white handkerchief was waved at him, and forgetting all else save that look and a grim desire to win now at all hazards, he threw the ball, straight and swift as an arrow, directly over the plate. The move was so quick, and the ball was thrown so hard, that the batter had not time to even raise his bat. The umpire shouted in a hoarse voice, "Strike one!" A prolonged "Ah!" was heard from the wearers of the blue, the Michigan team. (The Ohio team chose yellow for their color.)

The catcher threw the ball back. The batter gritted his teeth, struck his bat on the ground defiantly, and dared James to throw another ball just like it. James seemed to take the challenge, for the ball whizzed straight for the plate. The batter got ready to fairly knock the cover off,

but lo! when within a few feet of him it suddenly shot toward him, and he hastily stepped back and the ball flew past. The umpire in a hoarse voice again called out, "Strike two!" Another prolonged "Ah!" from the blue, a yell of delight from the imp, and the ball was again tossed back to the pitcher.

James' eyes again wandered to the grand stand, a little white handkerchief was once more waved and the ball again shot straight as an arrow over the base, fooling the batter, who was now on the lookout for the much-talked-of curves of the Michigan pitcher.

"Strike three and the batter out," shouted the umpire once more.

The batter took his place on the benches and another took up his position, only to share a like fate. The third one fared no better than his brethren, and the teams again changed places, neither side scoring the slightest advantage thus far.

It now seemed to be purely a pitcher's battle, and was growing a little monotonous for the rest of the players, who were beginning to wish something would happen to enable them to win a few laurels.

The game progressed nearly in the same manner for seven innings, neither side being able to reach first base, although one hit on each side was made.

Never before had such ball playing been seen in the State, and the excitement was intense, people shouting, laughing, gesticulating and cheering the players on to victory, the only cool persons on the grounds being the two pitchers, who remained as cool and calm as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. It was purely a question of endurance now between them, although the stalwart figure of the Ohio man seemed bound to win in the end, being fully twenty-five pounds heavier than his opponent, and the muscles stood out on his brawny, dark arms like huge whip cords.

The fair white arms of James, although large and well

proportioned, looked like mere reeds when compared to his rival's, but the sinewy muscles concealed beneath his white skin were like bands of solid steel, and one had but to grasp them in their hands to realize the enormous strength and endurance that lay beneath the exterior.

In the eighth inning the Ohio team scored one tally. The batter got to first base on a dead ball, and another got a base on balls. This left a man on first and another on second base, with the heaviest batter of the Ohio team at the bat; in fact, it was this same batter who scored the only hit in the game so far.

They had thrown two balls. One was declared a strike by the umpire and one a ball.

The third whizzed through with dizzy speed, but the batter managed to connect somehow with the ball and knocked it to left field, where it was stopped by the fielder, who threw it to the pitcher's box, but the ball flew high and sped over James' head and toward the grand stand, with the man on second base now around on the home stretch. James ran to the home plate while the catcher pursued the ball, but he was too late to stop the runner, who sprawled on the home plate just as the catcher threw the ball to James. This gave the Ohio team the advantage. It was now the eighth inning and they had one tally with two men on bases, one on second base and the other on the third.

The pitcher of the rival team came to the bat and challenged James to throw one over the plate so that he could knock the cover off.

The excitement was now intense. With two men on bases and one tally to nothing, it was looking exceedingly blue for the University of Michigan.

The Ohio rooters were howling themselves hoarse, but they were still answered defiantly by the Wolverines. The fat man was now wildly excited and arose from his seat, shouting, "Hold them down, young man! Hold them down, young man! Five hundred dollars is yours if you beat them."

"Don't you worry 'bout dat, Mr. fat man," bawled out the imp. "We's gest agoing to win dis hereh game in a walk. Why, Marse James is only fooling with dem fellers. Jest you wait till de next round of dis hereh fight; we's agoing to make dem Buckeye fellers look like thirty-cent pieces."

There were some, however, who were not so sanguine, for they remembered the eight hard-fought innings with no scores on either side.

The batter waved his bat defiantly at the pitcher. He now imagined James was about fagged out, and it would be easy to find him. He was sadly disappointed, for James was now desperate. Three balls were thrown directly over the plate in quick succession, with a savage fury that exceeded all of the pitching done thus far during the game.

The umpire called the first one a strike, and the batter framed the air the last two, leaving the two men to die on bases.

The teams changed places once more. It was the home team's last chance to score, while the Ohio team had yet another chance. The first batter was struck out, but Slim, the second batter, got a base on a dead ball, and James came to the plate. It was now the last chance to win the game, but there was small hope, for even should he succeed in connecting with the Ohio man's dizzy curves, he would have to make a home run. The next to bat was Felix Murphy, a first-class second base man, but his one weak point was being a poor batter, and there was absolutely no chance whatever of any assistance from that source.

The first two balls thrown were too high and the umpire called out two balls. The third and fourth were strikes. Nearly every one had now given up all hope of Michigan winning the game.

The fat man arose in his seat and bawled out, "Young man, you have done well, but the other fellow was too big and strong for you. I have lost two thousand dollars, but

I don't regret the bet, and would bet another two thousand even money on another game. It is the greatest ball game I ever witnessed."

A cheer greeted this speech, but the imp instantly arose, mad as a hornet.

"See hereh, you big, good-for-nothin' stiff," he shouted, "who tole you we done gwine to lose dis hereh game? Is you trying to get out ob buying dat air suit of clothes? If you is, youse gwine to habe trouble with dis hereh young col'od gentleman cause I's a man ob honor and allus pays when I loses and wants ma dough when I wins. Marse James is gwine to make a home run dis next time."

"Oh, that's all right, young man, you'll get your suit of clothes and a gold watch in the bargain."

"Golly, am dat so?" shouted the imp. "Well, just wait until Marse Jimmie makes this home run."

These remarks were greeted with a yell of derision by the crowd of Ohio rooters, who now thought there was not a ghost of a show for the Michigan team.

James' eyes once more wandered to the sea of faces in the grand stand, where Violet and the rest of the family were sitting. He saw the face of Frank light up with a cruel smile, while Violet's face was deathly pale with anger. Frank saw James looking at them at that moment, and said something to Violet. She turned her head, and seeing James gazing at her, spellbound, she arose from her seat, but was quickly pulled back by Frank. James watched closely and he saw Frank look at her sternly and say something to her, the import of which James had to guess.

All this transpired in much less time than it takes to tell it. The Ohio pitcher had seen the little by-play going on in the grand stand, and was so interested a spectator that he neglected to throw the ball during this short space of time; in fact, let the man on first base steal down to second base. Had he thrown the ball, the result of the game would have been much different. James was so dumfounded at the scene

enacted before his eyes that in all probability the pitcher could have thrown the ball and he would not have been prepared to strike at it. But he was now, however, for he saw the look in his brother's eyes and the cruel desire on Frank's part to see him defeated and humiliated in Violet's eyes.

Even had he lost the game, it would have made him none the less popular. The gallant fight he put up against the heretofore invincible Ohio man who had enjoyed easy victories over all his antagonists so far would have won him the admiration of the base-ball fans of both sides.

The umpire was getting impatient by now and called out, "Play ball." The Ohio champion doubled himself up like a jack-knife, threw the ball with a downward shoot, nearly touching the plate. James' bat flew back quick as lightning; there was a swish, a sharp report as the bat struck the ball fairly. Away sped the ball, far over the heads of the outfielders, who, seeing the ball was bound to pass them, made a wild run for it. Further and further it sped, over the heads of the outfielders, and fell on the exterior of the high board fence erected for the purpose of keeping out dead-heads and persons who wished to see ball games without paying for the privilege.

Such a feat had never before been accomplished, and the yells and shouts that went up from thousands of throats had never been equalled on that diamond before, and it is doubtful if it ever will be again.

James was scudding around the bases with the speed of a whirlwind, and the long legs of Slim, who was flying along in front of him, worked like piston rods. Third base was quickly covered and passed by Slim, with James half way to second. As Slim's foot touched the home plate James passed third, having run three bases while Slim ran two. At this instant the ball was seen to fly over the fence straight as an arrow toward the pitcher's box. The throw was a marvel, as it had to be thrown by guess. It fell straight into the hands of the burly Ohio pitcher, who threw it with all the force of his mighty strength to the home plate.

Which would win—ball or man? It looked like an even chance, and was nearly so, for the runner and ball both arrived at exactly the same time, but the catcher staggered for a moment, and James fell headlong over the plate just as the catcher reached down and touched him, but just a second too late.

The umpire called out, "Safe!" amidst the cheering of the crowd. Some of the players, however, were inclined to dispute the decision, but were instantly hushed by the pitcher of the Ohio team, who said, "He was safe." This manly declaration of the Ohio man was wildly cheered and probably saved the umpire from being mobbed, for the nerves of the vast throng had been on the extreme tension so long that the least excuse would have served to create a riot.

The words of the pitcher had a greater effect than this, however, as they served to bind together two men in a friendship that lasted a lifetime.

The game now stood two scores to one in favor of the Michigan team, with two men out and one more chance for the Ohio team to go to the bat to win back the other score. The next man was struck out, and the Michigan team took the field for the last time.

One man got to first by being struck with the ball, which everybody could see was intentional. The second two fared no better, leaving the first batter to die on first base, and the great game was ended, the Michigan team winning by James' phenomenal hit.

Big Will Ellis was the first to congratulate James upon his great play.

"It beat anything I ever saw on the diamond," he declared, "and while, of course, I regret losing the game, I am glad that it was by so gallant a foe I met defeat."

The ball game over, the crowd mingled together, the Ohioans and Wolverines discussed the game together, and, of course, the great theme was the play made by James.

Three cheers were proposed by Wilford Ellis, and they were

given with a will by both sides, the Ohio delegation not to be outdone in chivalry by their pitcher.

The vast throngs now vacated the ball grounds and went to their various destinations.

Wilford Ellis went with James at the latter's request, and was introduced to his relatives.

Mr. Vernon, in a few well-chosen words, congratulated Mr. Ellis upon his excellent playing, saying that except for his natural pride in seeing his son victorious, he heartily wished that Mr. Ellis had won, and that his splendid work certainly merited a victory.

Grasping his son's hand, Mr. Vernon said in deep, earnest tones, "James, my son, what a proud day this is for your father! With what pride and joy do I stand here and see my boy come out victorious in this splendid game, to see the favor which he has found with these multitudes of people and to hear them applaud him! I can hardly find words sincere enough in which to congratulate you and express my pride, James, but perhaps the most sincere words which I may address to you now, my son, is the heart-felt wish that my boy may come out just as victorious in the more serious games of life with his success as well merited. Now I will make way for the rest of the family to tender their congratulations," and, with a smile, he stepped aside.

"Marse Jimmie! Marse Jimmie!" exclaimed a saucy little voice, "A t'ousand congratulations. You done the splendidest playing I ever seed," said Elph, as he came hurrying up, his little black fingers clinging to the hand of a large black-whiskered man. "I done tole dis gentleman dat youh'd surely win. And, Marse James, allow me to present one ob de finest gentlemen on dese grounds, Massa Milton Le Marr, of Ann Arbor. Massa Le Marr, Massa James Vernon, son ob my dear old master, ob Mt. Vernon, Michigan," said Elph, bowing low.

"Most delighted to meet you," said Mr. Le Marr, as the two men shook hands. He had admired James a great deal, but had never before happened to have the opportunity to meet

him personally. James then made him acquainted with the members of his family, and with his new friend, Wilford Ellis.

After greetings and congratulations were exchanged on all sides, Mr. Le Marr gave the party a very pressing invitation to partake of the hospitality of his apartments in the Palais Belvidere. After some consideration, they accepted. Together they all quitted the grounds and made their way uptown to a handsome huge gray-stone building, which was a sort of a hotel and club combined. They ascended to the fifth floor, and Mr. Le Marr led them down a long corridor. Arriving at a heavy oaken door, he stopped and inserted his key. Flinging it open, he said, with a smile, "Enter, ladies and gentlemen, and, pray, try and make yourselves at home in the den of an old bachelor."

They entered the richly-furnished rooms, and Mr. Le Marr touched a bell, whereupon a maid appeared and took charge of their wraps.

A pleasant hour was spent in chatting and admiring Milton Le Marr's choice collection of works of art and antiquity, and finally supper was announced.

They all did ample justice to the delicious supper, and big, handsome Will Ellis sat directly opposite Mary, much to his delight, where he could feast his eyes upon her pretty face. Mary's cheeks grew crimson as she met the admiring eyes of Wilford Ellis bent upon her whenever she looked toward him. But Mary seemed to enjoy the admiration for her expressed in those deep gray eyes, and a mutual compact seemed to unconsciously spring up between them. They had eyes and ears for no one else the rest of the evening.

Many topics were discussed during the evening, and when the gentlemen joined the ladies in the parlor, after having their cigars and wine, the conversation turned upon incidents and conditions of their various lives. Before the evening was over the Vernons learned more about the lives and pursuits of their two new friends.

Their host, Milton Le Marr, seemed to be quite alone in

the world as far as relatives were concerned, but being a man of attractive personality, gracious, generous-hearted and handsome, he never lacked friends nor admiration, and his hospitable doors were always open to his many friends and acquaintances. Born in France, of poor but respectable parents, he was brought to America when a small child, and his father and mother labored together for several years to earn an honest living and give their son the semblance of an education. At the age of fifteen he lost his parents, their deaths having occurred but a short time apart, and Milton was left upon his own resources. He was never discouraged, but persevered, during the years of trials and hard work that followed, and slowly but surely mounted the steps of success and fortune until now in his forty odd years of age he found himself at the head of a large and well-established business, a rich man, enabled to enjoy the good things of this world.

One by one his near relatives in France and England (his mother was an Englishwoman) had dropped off until only a few very distant remained, and of these Milton Le Marr had lost all track.

Wilford Ellis was left an orphan early in life, and is the only grandson of Jeremiah and Hannah Ellis, who have idolized him from the time they took him to raise as their own son when he was a mere boy of five years of age, and when their beloved son was laid at rest beside the grave of his young wife, who had preceded him by two years.

The Ellises were old pioneers of Toledo, Ohio, and several branches of the family were now scattered in different parts of the State. Some were men and women of mark; some rich and some poor; but all honorable, upright and just. Wilford's grandparents were situated in fair circumstances financially, and able to give their grandson an excellent education. Old Mr. Ellis had been for many years in the fur business, besides having quite extensive real estate interests in Toledo. The old gentleman had, however, retired from

active business on account of failing health, and as Mrs. Ellis was in delicate health the old couple lived very quietly in their pretty, rambling cottage, surrounded by its neat lawns and flower gardens on the outskirts of the city. Three old domestics, who had been in their service for many years, lived happily with them, and tendered them their services, for which they were well recompensed by Mr. Ellis. Many serene and happy years had Wilford spent in his quiet, pretty home, with his gentle and loving grandparents. With pride they have watched him grow up to young manhood, and they see him now, a young fellow of twenty-three, just in the flush of his splendid young manhood and strength, genial, handsome, kind-hearted and generous, a great favorite with his friends and well liked and admired by all with whom he came in contact.

The evening passed away rapidly, and our friends realized they must be moving toward the depot if they wished to board the 11.15 train, and so Mr. Le Marr ordered carriages for the whole party and they drove rapidly to the depot accompanied by Mr. Le Marr, Wilford and James, to see them off.

At the depot both Milton Le Marr and Wilford Ellis received cordial invitations from Mr. and Mrs. Vernon to come and make them a long visit at Greenwold whenever they might find it convenient.

As Wilford Ellis helped Mary on the train he could not refrain from requesting her to give him the white rose pinned on her corsage, "in commemoration of the happy meeting with her and his new friends," as he laughingly explained. The request was accompanied by a look amounting almost to adoration, and she blushing handed it to him. There was a merry twinkle in Milton Le Marr's black eyes as he watched them, and he said audibly, in Mr. Vernon's ear, "Have a care, Mr. Vernon. Put up strong barricades. I foresee that you may be in danger of losing your lovely daughter." Mary gave him a saucy look, which seemed

to say, "Father, pay no attention to his babbling," and regretfully bade him good-bye, telling him what an entertaining host he had been, and how much she had enjoyed the evening.

At last the good-byes were said. Mrs. Vernon was the last to take leave of her son and kiss him good-bye, but Violet's face was the last one he saw as he turned toward the city with the other two, and when at length the three men parted for the night each mind was occupied by its own visions, and each heart was saddened or brightened by its individual longings.

Wilford Ellis' slumbers were disturbed by visions of Mary Vernon's sweet face, lighted up by its soulful dark eyes and framed by its wealth of glossy dark hair.

Violet's radiant yet sorrowful face, with a wistful, longing look in her dark blue eyes, her golden curls forming a halo around her white brow, haunted James' dreams.

Milton Le Marr slept on in his deep, dreamless, unbroken rest.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Marriage of Wilford and Mary

Three months passed away and July is here with its light breezes and drowsy summer days.

Greenwold was looking its best, the lawns green and beautiful, the gardens gorgeous with bright-hued flowers, and the giant oaks and elms waving their branches as if inviting one to come and rest in the hammocks under their rustling green leaves and enjoy their beautiful shade.

It was early on this particular morning, and Mary was moving about the house light-hearted and gay, and Mr. and Mrs. Vernon were joyous and expectant, for James and Wilford Ellis were expected to arrive this morning.

The two young men had become fast friends and planned to spend the summer holidays together. They spent the month of June at Wilford's home, in Toledo, and now intended to while away the rest of the beautiful summer at James' picturesque home.

They arrived in due time, and Wilford was not a little joyous and elated as the lovely summer days went by, spent in the company of Mary Vernon. It was not long before he asked Mr. Vernon's permission to pay addresses to his daughter, receiving Mr. Vernon's hearty wishes for his success.

Wilford lost no time in his wooing, and the pleasant little picnics and country excursions arranged for their entertainment gave him plenty of opportunity to ardently press his suit, and before school opened that fall handsome Wilford Ellis, the envy of his college chums, and the admiration of the girls, had secured Mary Vernon's promise to become his wife during the Christmas holidays.

September came at last, and with it the boys' return to their classes. The commencement of school was a great

relief to James, who wanted to be far away from the object which he still loved far better than his own life.

It may have been disloyal, but he was only human after all, and who shall censure him for failing to conquer a passion stronger than his own nature.

Whatever his mad longings were, he was at least loyal to his brother in every action, for he avoided her whenever it was possible; but the sad, reproachful look in her eyes haunted him for months after his departure for college.

The Christmas holidays came around, and we find the three friends—James, Wilford and Milton Le Marr—on the eve of their departure for Mt. Vernon.

On the train Wilford was full of enthusiasm over his approaching marriage, and drew such rosy pictures of the future that it caused poor James' heart to swell to almost the bursting point. Had he not drawn those same pictures with Violet as his wife, and rosy-cheeked children romping over the floor?

Wilford saw the look of pain in James' eyes, and silently grasped his hand. There are times when words are not half as valuable as silence. James returned the pressure, and they rode the rest of the way in silence.

As they approached the depot at Mt. Vernon, Wilford said, kindly, "Come, old fellow, you must not look as if you were going to a funeral instead of a wedding. What will the folks say?" The kindly look from Milton Le Marr's deep black eyes fastened upon James' blue orbs seemed to cheer and sustain him.

"I can see them now at the station—your father, mother, sister, the imp, and, by Jove! there is Frank also," and under his breath he muttered, "the infernal scoundrel! I'll wager he has come here to gloat over his brother by giving him an invitation to remain with him during the Christmas holidays."

Wilford was right. Frank grasped them both by the hand,

pressing them, together with Mr. Le Marr, with invitations to share his hospitality.

James thanked him coldly, and in an easy manner he genially inquired after the health of all.

"By Jove! he'll do all right," muttered Will to himself; "no fear of him making a scene. He is true grit."

The keen eyes of Wilford Ellis long ago detected the love that James still bore for Violet, and the look in her eyes on the day of the great ball game, when she threw prudence to the winds, had also revealed her feelings toward James.

Why she had married Frank was a mystery which he some day meant to solve. He felt an unaccountable aversion to Frank, and in his mind he mentally compared him to some great snake, ready at any moment to fold his deadly coils about some helpless victim. Not that Frank had ever been aught but polite and friendly toward him, but the feeling would somehow remain in spite of all his efforts to shake it off.

The wedding was the great social event of the season. All the friends of Mary in Mt. Vernon were invited, as well as Wilford's grandparents and friends from Ohio.

The old mansion was beautifully decorated with a profusion of cut flowers and with wreaths of holly. Branches of evergreen and mistletoe were intermingled with the greenery of the decorative scheme.

The spacious drawing room, converted into a veritable floral bower, was a fair setting for the daughter of the house, radiant and beautiful in her robes of white satin and lace, blushing shyly beneath her transparent veil as she entered upon the arm of her father and took her place beside the bridegroom under the floral bell beneath which the ceremony was performed.

Mr. Vernon gave the bride away. James acted as best man. Susanne attended the bride as maid of honor (much to the secret disgust of James).

After the nuptial knot was tied the company repaired to the handsomely-decorated dining room, and were seated at tables glittering with silver and cut glass, and the daintiest of wedding breakfasts was served.

One of the guests proposed a toast, wishing the health of the bride. Ex-Senator Thurman, of Michigan, a great wit and after-dinner speaker, was called upon to act as toast-master, and made the following somewhat lengthy, but pleasant toast. Rising and clearing his throat, he began:

"The pleasant and somewhat difficult task of proposing what we shall all agree is the toast of the present happy occasion has been entrusted to my care. I have been asked to propose long life and health and happiness to the bride. The task is exceedingly pleasant, but somewhat difficult, the point of the difficulty being this: that I scarcely know how to find words that will fitly and fully express the warm and enthusiastic desires we all cherish for the future happiness of our dear friend, the bride. There was a very learned man named Chrysostom, who died many centuries ago, who was so eloquent that men gave him the name of the golden-mouth.

"Now I feel that a man need have a golden mouth, and that mouth full to the lips with most eloquent phrases, to be equal to the present occasion. No words can give complete utterance to what we all feel in this joyful hour. We sometimes ask our friends to read between the lines. I must trust to the kindness of the bride to endeavor to hear between the sentences, for I assure her there are undertones of deep affection for her that no common words can express.

"The present occasion is very joyous, partly because of the sacredness of the relations into which our friends have entered. The marriage festival is somewhat more than a record of the triumphs of love. Our gentle friend has been wooed and won, and love was crowned as she plighted her troth to-day before God and her friends. But to-day she steps forth from the maiden beauties of life's morning to a

larger and nobler career. And as she enters that untrodden path we gather round and with one heart and thought wish for her and for him whom she calls husband for the first time to-day, long life, and joy and peace.

"Leaving to-day the peace and gladness of her early home, leaving behind her the sweet associations of her glad young days, she takes with her larger life of wedded womanhood the best wishes of us all. From this happy day we look out to her future and pray heaven to make it radiant and serene.

"I will not trespass further on your patience. I ask you all with all our hearts to join with me: The bride: long life and happiness and peace."

At the conclusion of the toast the Senator drained his glass, and amid much applause resumed his seat.

Wilford now arose and began in a somewhat shaky voice:

"Believe me, my dear friends, when I say that I appreciate with all my heart the kind and enthusiastic manner in which you have expressed your love and good wishes for the lady whom I am proud and happy—as proud as happy and as happy as proud—this day to call by the endearing name of 'wife.'

"The tenderness and affection you have manifested for her only serves to deepen the assurance that in life's great lottery I have indeed won a prize. To be worthy of a lady so much beloved will henceforth be the one ambition of my life. And if I may so soon begin to represent my dearer and better half, I feel I ought to say on her behalf that she will treasure in her heart of hearts and among her most sacred memories all the kindness of to-day, and as years come and go, I trust that I also may have a place in your good favor.

"But as I look around this festive scene I cannot but express my gratitude to the fair bridesmaids who have made this occasion so joyful. I beg on behalf of Mrs. Ellis and myself that they will accept our loving gratitude.

"Their grace and beauty have indeed enriched our mar-

riage festival, and if they would receive one kindly word of advice from the bride of to-day it would be couched in scriptural language—‘Go thou and do likewise.’ I trust the bachelors present will take the hint and render the bridesmaids all the assistance that lies in their power. (Much laughter.) They have spoken many flattering words to-day out of their kind, warm hearts. I beg to remind them of that old trite proverb, ‘Imitation is the highest kind of flattery.’ (More laughter.) And I trust before many moons are passed some, at least, of these young ladies who have graduated as bridesmaids to-day will themselves be decked with orange blossoms. I beg you will join me in drinking to the bridesmaids.”

James now responded on behalf of the bridesmaids. He was a noted speaker in college circles. He always represented his fellow collegians at public functions and had a great flow of wit and humor, and I fear but small regard for the truth on an occasion like this.

Rising to his feet, he looked about the room with an assumed timid air and then began:

“I beg to assure this audience that I have occasionally been in what is called ‘a tight place,’ in my somewhat short experience, but never in the whole course of my life have I been in as ‘tight a place’ as I find myself at this moment. (Smiles.) I am asked to represent the bridesmaids! I never represented anybody in my life. Indeed, I have hardly had the courage to represent myself. (Laughter.) And when I look around on the grace, the beauty and the winsome loveliness of these charming bridesmaids, and think I have to represent all that, I am appalled. My heart sinks within me.

“Speaking on behalf of these fair ladies, I can only say that I, that is to say *we*, are profoundly happy if we have been able to conduce in the least to the brightness and joy of this memorable occasion. I, that is to say *we*, have known our dear friend, the bride, a long time, and we have known

her only to love her very dearly. I trust the bridegroom will understand that I am speaking in my representative capacity.

"I, that is to say, *we*, congratulate the bride on this auspicious day, and if we do not exactly envy her, we assure her that at the very earliest possible date, we will all follow her example; for, to tell the truth, we're tired of waiting, and some of us are growing a little anxious. (Laughter.) I don't know whether this is exactly what the bridesmaids would say themselves, but, as their representative, I am trying to keep as near the truth as possible. I, that is to say, *we*, have been to-day glad spectators in a memorable scene. We confess to having felt more than a little nervous; but what must it be to be the chief actress on such an occasion? (Mary's blushes chase each other in charming confusion over her beautiful face at this last remark.) To solve this problem will be henceforth the ardent ambition of every one of us.

"In conclusion, and to be serious for a moment, I am sure that the ladies who have fulfilled the office of bridesmaids to-day desire with all their hearts to congratulate their friends, the bride and bridegroom, and wish them all possible happiness through many long years."

James then kissed his sister and congratulated Wilford, which was a signal for a general ovation, and the merry crowd surrounded the happy pair, wishing them joy and happiness through their wedded life.

After a few moments, Mary left her guests, but soon reappeared, clad in her velvet traveling attire and rich furs.

In the meantime, Elph had driven the family carriage up to the entrance, and it stood in readiness. It was now train time, and Wilford and Mary mounted the carriage amid a shower of rice, old shoes and the good wishes of their friends.

They barely reached the station in time, and it was a good thing for them that they did not have long to wait, for a large crowd of the burly Ohio athlete's admirers were at the train to see him and his beautiful bride off. On their trunks,

painted in large white letters, were the words, "Just Married." The carriage and horses bore the same conspicuous words, and some of the most enterprising tacked some large white banners on the coach bearing the same words.

Big, good-natured Will took it all in good part, remarking, "Well, they don't intend to let us forget the fact that we're married."

The same friends who had so kindly labeled all their luggage had been thoughtful enough to telegraph ahead to all the stations along the route, and they received an enthusiastic reception at each place.

It was getting somewhat embarrassing for Mary, and he resolved to spoil their little game. Accordingly, when they reached Owosso, a junction for a large number of railroads, they quitted their train and stopped in the town for a day. Wilford bought new trunks and grips, and they repacked their effects in the new receptacles. When leaving Owosso they continued their journey over a different road, and the rest of the way was traveled in peace.

They spent several weeks in Ohio and the South, and then returned to Mt. Vernon. Wilford had graduated in a medical course, and it was decided that he would hang up his shingle of M.D. in Mt. Vernon.

Old Dr. Wright had been the leading physician ever since the place was big enough to support a man of his profession. He was growing too old and feeble now to properly attend to the arduous duties of a physician, and announced his intention of retiring and taking life easy. He had saved up a snug little sum, and could well afford to do so.

Wilford purchased his office, and Dr. Wright used his influence to help him along, with the result that he got nearly all of the retired physician's practice.

Mr. Vernon gave them a beautiful cottage as a present. It is situated near the business section of the city, and is the most convenient place for his profession.

The black diphtheria broke out the winter following Wil-

ford's marriage, and he labored night and day, and it was mainly through his efforts that the disease was finally stamped out. He won the heartfelt thanks of nearly half of the mothers in the city and the deep, but silent, curses of the rival physicians.

Dr. Jackson, the county physician, was openly accused of gross negligence by the city editor.

The editor insisted that the schools must close, and the doctor, more to be stubborn than anything else, refused to order them closed. As a result, they both called each other hard names. The doctor threatened to sue the editor for damages on account of the offensive sheet, and the editor, in turn, threatened to order an investigation regarding his conduct in refusing to close the schools.

The affair promised some pretty lively developments, but finally died away like a summer thunder-storm, the rumbling growing fainter and fainter each day, until it was finally forgotten altogether.

Leaving Wilford and Mary happy and prosperous in their wedded life, we will once more take up the narrative of James' life.

CHAPTER XV.

Death of the Merchant of Mt. Vernon

Three years have now passed away. Ann Arbor's most famous athlete is on the eve of closing his college career.

It is afternoon, and he is at the depot to meet his relatives and intimate friends, who have all come to witness the graduating exercises, to be held in the evening.

Let us take a look at our old friends and see if three years have wrought much change in them.

We will begin with James as he stands shaking hands with the new arrivals as they alight from the train. He has grown taller, stouter and more broad-shouldered. He is fully six feet four, and a finer specimen of young manhood could not be found. The easy grace with which he moves about, greeting his friends, speaks of a Herculean strength, and as he greets his brother he towers head and shoulders above him. His face is covered with a golden beard that makes him look like an Apollo. His former look of careless ease has changed to one of quiet thoughtfulness and calm. No one observing him would guess there had been a disappointment in his past life. Time, the great healer and moulder of all things, had laid a kindly hand on him and the old pain had partly subsided and the keenest smarts of disappointment were mercifully blotted out, but there was a void in his life which would never be quite filled.

But let us look at Frank. He has changed from a quick-tempered, passionate man to a timid, frightened being, who starts at his own shadow. His former black hair has changed to iron gray and he looks to be fully twenty years older than he really is.

His mother is the next whom James meets, and she does not look a day older than she did three years ago.

His father is changed somewhat, his hair is slightly gray

and business cares are telling on him. The likeness between father and son is striking, both have the same golden beard and upright carriage, but it is easily seen that the father was never as perfect a being as the son is now.

Mary and Wilford are still lovers. They both grasp his hands at once. Will, big, good-natured and smiling, warns him not to get stage-fright that evening. It would be hard to find two men more perfect in form and face than these two as they stand facing each other. Both are giants in stature, although James has the advantage of a half inch in height. As they stand side by side they tower head and shoulders above the rest, and are the cynosure of all eyes. But both are accustomed to be gazed at, and pay no attention to the curious eyes focused upon them.

Mary has grown handsomer and more matronly since we last met her. She is the mother of two bouncing boys, who, she laughingly says, she left behind, as they will probably have entertainment enough without their strong young voices.

Violet is the last one he greets, and, as their hands touch and eyes meet, the same old magnetic current passes through them both, and he murmurs something unintelligible and turns to the faithful colored servants, who are all there to see the young marse made a doctor.

With a groan, she inwardly says, "How can a just God put such a devil and deceiver in so perfect a god-like figure and face!" Her thoughts fly back to Susanne, who was fast becoming a sour old maid. "The villain," she muttered. "I don't believe his conscience troubles him a mite." But in her own heart she knew she loved him and him only.

He graduated with highest honors, and, after receiving his diploma, he accompanied the family back to Mt. Vernon. Yielding to the entreaties of his parents and Will and Mary, he decided to begin his career as a doctor in his old home.

Wilford declared he had more practice than he could handle properly, and needed a good, trusty partner. The result was that Will and James occupied the same office, Will looking

after the majority of the contagious diseases, and James attending to the surgical cases. It had been a bitter blow to Mr. Vernon when James suddenly announced his intention of giving up his career as a business man and devoting his time to learn a profession, but the two young physicians were doing so well now that he rejoiced that James had made his decision to become a doctor.

James seldom visited his brother's home, and when he did he never remained long. The air always seemed stifling, and he was always glad when it came time to take his departure. He could not endure the agony of seeing the beautiful woman whom once he fondly hoped to call by the sacred name of wife in the home of another and that man's wife, and it is doubtful if Violet could have retained her composure.

The relationship between Violet and her husband had improved after the birth of their little daughter, Grace, who was now nearly three years old.

Violet tried to be a good wife for the child's sake. A loving one she knew she could never be, and Frank tried to outlive the memory of that scene at the old mill dam in the light of his wife's and child's affection. He had partly broken the habit of drinking since his marriage, but he was fast growing into a morose, crabbed old man.

Soon after James' return to Mt. Vernon, Frank fell ill, and for many weeks his life was despaired of, but, thanks to the untiring efforts of James and Wilford, as well as Violet, they finally managed to pull him through; but he was never himself again. In his delirium he constantly raved about the dam and Marguerite. The two doctors paid no attention, believing it to be simply the wild fancy of a sick man. But Violet believed and feared otherwise. The scales had been gradually dropping from her eyes, and numerous sentences he had muttered in his sleep concerning the old mill dam and Marguerite had caused a horrible suspicion to enter her mind. What if he were the murderer of that poor girl whom every one believed to have fallen accidentally into the water! She drew

many pictures in her mind of that meeting down by the dam, and some were horribly near the truth. What if the father of her child is a murderer! She felt that she had indeed been punished for her reckless decision in marrying Frank. She would sink upon her knees when alone and cry, "Not that, my God, not that! Gracie's father must not be a murderer!"

When he arose from his sick-bed he closely questioned Violet about his ravings, but she skillfully parried his questions, saying that he had said many things while sick, none of which she could distinctly remember. He eyed her closely, but could see nothing to excite suspicion, and finally concluded that he had said nothing damaging to himself.

His thirst for liquor grew very strong again, and he drank heavily shortly after he was able to resume his duties at the bank. He often came home in a beastly state of intoxication. Violet begged, pleaded and threatened in turn, but she was powerless to stop his appetite for rum.

Inside of a year he was unable to attend to any business whatever, and the bank officials, in disgust, finally asked him to resign.

After this he sank rapidly, at last becoming a mere whining wretch, who would stop any one on the street and beg money for the price of a drink. He squandered the whole of his private fortune and even sold the largest part of his household furniture and all personal valuables to satisfy the ever increasing craving for drink.

Poor Violet bore up patiently for the child's sake and complained to no one. James' heart ached for the poor woman, but he was helpless.

The conduct of Frank broke his father's heart. He had been failing rapidly of late, and one evening, as he came from his place of business, he witnessed the sad and humiliating spectacle of seeing his son (once the most promising young business man of the city—now the city drunkard) thrown out of a saloon door, his face cut and bleeding, his clothes torn and dirty, and his hair rumpled up in a tangled, bloody mass.

"My son! my son!" cried the old man, kneeling down and taking the wobbling head of his wayward boy in his lap. "To think that you should come to this!"

"Hello, father. That you?" he muttered, thickly. "Give us the price of a drink."

"Come home with me, my boy," he said; "you are in no fit state to take a drink. What you want is rest and quiet."

"Give me a drink, do you hear?" he cried, savagely; "give me a drink, I say!" The fumes of the liquor had got the best of him now, and he recognized nobody.

At this moment the city marshal came out of the saloon, saying that he thought Frank had killed a lumberman. They were both drunk, and Frank hit the fellow over the head with a beer bottle. James approached at the same instant, and, taking in the scene quickly asked what the trouble was.

Touching his cap, the officer related how he had witnessed the fight, but was not quick enough to prevent Frank from striking his quarrelsome partner, and concluded by saying that he would be obliged to lock Frank up until it was ascertained whether or not he had killed the man. Frank had been in the lockup dozens of times before, and he felt that it would be best to have him put where no more liquor could reach him for a time at least.

As the wretched man was led away the father rose from the position he had taken while holding his son's head, gave one look after the officer and prisoner, and without a word fell backward into James' arms—dead!

CHAPTER XVI.

The Illness of Little Grace

After the funeral of Mr. Vernon was over the will was read, which left his property equally divided between his three children and wife.

The negroes were well remembered, also, but alas! so uncertain are the affairs of this life! Unfortunate speculations and heavy drafts made by Frank, who had gambled the money away, left his once vast fortune a total wreck. His father had spent vast sums to cover up the defalcations of his son, and in a frantic endeavor to regain the money that he might carry on his business safely he plunged in Wall Street stocks, and they went down, sweeping away the bulk of the fortune. The trouble had been gradually sapping his strength, and when he witnessed the disgraceful scene in front of the saloon, it was the last straw, and the poor old man died of a broken heart.

The man who was struck by Frank in the saloon was able to be up and about in a few days, consequently Frank was released after receiving the usual lecture from the judge. He was in the grip of the delirium tremens when his father's funeral took place, and knew nothing about it until he was released. It had no effect upon him whatever. The demon of thirst had him too completely in its power.

James was obliged to move out of the palatial residence that had been the Vernon home for so many years, and it, too, was sold to satisfy the claims against the estate.

He and his mother took a little cottage close to where Frank lived, and many a night Violet and her little daughter would have gone to bed hungry had it not been for Mrs. Vernon and James.

There was one being whom James absolutely worshiped. It was little Gracie, and she returned his affection. The lit-

the miss passed nearly half her time in her big "Uncle Dim's" office, and when out on a call he would always take her with him. The little girl and the imp, who was James' driver, would sit in the carriage and build air castles. The child was a sweet, lovable, blue-eyed, golden-haired little one, and everybody loved her.

One rainy night Frank came home in an uglier mood than usual, and put both Violet and her little girl out in the storm, and they were forced to seek shelter at James' home.

Mrs. Vernon was deeply shocked at her son's behavior, and James was furious, but powerless.

The little one caught cold from being wet that night, the result being that she had the croup before morning. James had been out late for several nights, and being tired and worn out slept soundly, not hearing the pitiful coughing and choking of his little favorite until Mrs. Vernon gently knocked upon his door. Just at this moment the little one had a more violent fit of coughing. His trained ear caught the sound and he was up in an instant. Hastily dressing, he ran into the room where the little sufferer lay. The child recognized him at once and tried to call his name, but her little throat was so badly swollen that the attempt precipitated another outburst of coughing. He saw in an instant that the case was a serious one and went to work with a will, for he well knew that all his skill was needed to save the little one's life. He labored desperately over her hour after hour, and each hour his hopes grew fainter.

Violet read despair on his face, and wildly throwing herself on the bed beside her child she cried, "Save her! Save her! Dr. Vernon, do not let my one hope and comfort be taken from me!"

James laid a kindly hand upon her shoulder and said:

"All that human aid can do has been done, and we must leave the rest in the hands of Him who giveth and taketh at His will."

"Is there any hope at all, doctor?" she tearfully asked.

"Had it not been for her I would long ago have given up. You cannot think what she is to me!"

A violent fit of choking from the little one now interrupted her, and the doctor once more bent over his little patient. After the lapse of twenty minutes he looked at his watch and said: "It is now five o'clock, and in one hour it will be daylight. If I can only keep her alive until then there will be a change for the better."

"God grant that you may!" said Mrs. Vernon, fervently, and then all three watchers relapsed into silence.

With the coming of dawn the little one had a more violent fit of choking than she had previously experienced and Dr. Vernon fairly held his breath for a short time. But the battle was won. The child's breathing became regular, and she sank into a deep slumber of exhaustion.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, "the danger is past, and when she awakens she will be better, but very weak. All she needs now is good nursing and perfect quiet."

"That she shall have!" said Mrs. Vernon, "and now, Violet and James, lie down and get a little rest while I watch over her. Should there be any change I will call you both at once."

Dr. Vernon assured her there would be no need, and took a much-needed rest. Violet remonstrated with Mrs. Vernon, saying she would watch, but the old lady had her own way, as she always did, and Violet was finally persuaded to lie down and take a rest.

When she awoke the sun was throwing its bright rays from the East upon her, and she hastily made her way to Grace's room.

Mrs. Vernon was still sitting at the child's bedside, and going up to her Violet threw her arms about Mrs. Vernon's neck and kissed her, saying, "How kind you have ever been to me, my more than mother!"

Mrs. Vernon returned the kiss, and said, "And you have ever been a kind and obedient daughter to me. I will leave

you now to watch by Gracie's bedside while I go and order a cup of tea and some refreshments for you."

The little one awoke in a few moments after Mrs. Vernon left the room, and seeing her mother looking anxiously at her she exclaimed, "Mamma! mamma! I have had such a terrible dream. I dreamed that I was going to die, and then Uncle Dim came and said he just wouldn't let me die! He gived me some awful, awful bad medicine, and said I just had to live, because it would make you so sad if I died. Mamma, would it make you very sad if I died?"

"Yes, my darling, it would break mamma's heart to lose her little treasure," said Violet, clasping her little daughter in her arms.

The little one laid perfectly quiet for a while, and then said, "Mamma, why is not Uncle Dim my pa instead of my real pa? I love him more than papa. He is always so good and don't get drunk and strike you like papa does. Don't you love him the best, too?"

"Hush, my child, you do not know what you are saying," cried Violet, hoarsely; "you must not say such naughty, wicked things about your papa."

"Well," persisted the little girl, "my Sunday School teacher says it is just as wicked to think things as to say them."

"But you must not feel them or think them," said Violet.

The little one appeared to be quite puzzled for a moment, and then asked: "Mamma, how can I help it?"

"You must pray to God to take the wicked things out of your heart," replied Violet, "and now you must not talk any more. Go to sleep, and to-morrow you may get up and we shall go home."

"I would rather stay here with grandma and Uncle Dim."

"Would you stay here and leave poor mamma all alone in the other house?"

"You can stay, too, my mamma!"

"No, no! Mamma must go to-morrow and take care of papa; and now you must not ask me any more questions or you will be sick again."

The conversation tired the little one out. She sank back upon her pillow with a sigh and fell fast asleep.

Aunt Lizzie soon brought in some fragrant, steaming tea and dainty eatables, and Violet partook of the refreshments, after which she lay down beside her baby. She lay awake several hours, thinking of what the child had said, but finally sank into a deep, dreamless slumber.

The shades of evening were falling when Mrs. Vernon entered the room, and seeing Violet asleep she threw a coverlet over her and quitted the room, leaving the light turned low.

James was called out of the city to attend an unfortunate who had been severely injured in a sawmill accident. He did not return until late, but Aunt Lizzie, his faithful old nurse, was still up and had a cup of steaming hot coffee waiting for him. James is her favorite, she declares, "because he is just like his dear, handsome, dead father." The old colored lady and Uncle Joe are past ninety, but both are still hale and hearty, and it was Aunt Lizzie's boast that she would live to see Marse Doctor James' children.

Doctor James would shake his head playfully, and say, "I am afraid you will be disappointed, mammy."

"We shall see! We shall see!" she invariably replies.

When James finished his coffee he softly tip-toed to the chamber where Violet and her little daughter lay fast asleep.

He stood gazing down upon the two for a moment and then turned, blew out the light and softly stole from the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

Frank Betrays the Secret of the Old Mill Dam

On the day following little Grace's illness Frank got on a worse spree than usual, and was locked up in the county jail for sixty days.

Violet was penniless, and had it not been for the kindness of James and Mrs. Vernon she and her baby would more than once have gone to bed hungry. Big-hearted, good-natured Wilford and Mary also contributed their share. Violet was too proud to accept aid from either Wilford or James, but Mrs. Vernon acted as the diplomat, and so delicately did she arrange matters that Violet could not refuse her aid.

As soon as Frank was released from jail he went at once to the office of Dr. Vernon and demanded money for drink. He had sunk so low now that he would resort to any method to obtain a drink.

Dr. Vernon firmly refused him, telling him it was for his own good that he withheld money from him.

Frank then threatened to wreck dire vengeance upon Violet if the money were not forthcoming.

"You love her! You love her!" he shrieked, "and I will punish you through her."

James, in disgust, gave up trying to reason with the sodden wretch, and Frank, seeing that his attempts at threatening were powerless adopted other tactics.

"Give me just money enough for one drink," he whined, "to steady my nerves."

"Why don't you get trusted for one drink?"

"Joe McCally won't trust me any more until I pay up an old score of twenty dollars which I owe him," he whined again. "Give me just enough for one drink and I will take

back what I said about Violet. Come, you love her, and I will give her up to you. She may be my wife in name only. She shall be your mistress if you will only supply me with liquor. I shall not live much longer and then she will be all yours."

"You miserable, drunken coward, I will thrash you within an inch of your life if you ever dare mention such a thing to me again. Get out of here before I forget that you are my mother's son and strangle you!" said James, shaking him violently by the shoulder.

A look of fear came into the wretched man's face, and he hastily made his way to the door, snarling:

"Curse you! I hate you! I hate you! It was I who told Susanne to accuse you of ruining her. It was I who led Violet to the old arbor that she might overhear! I it was who sent her to Violet afterward and had her tell Violet that you had ruined her young life, and refused to marry her because you tired of her, and then wished to marry Violet!"

After hurling these words at his brother he quickly slammed the door and hurried down the street, glancing furtively over his shoulder to see if he was being pursued by his brother. There was no danger from that source, however, for it was with a feeling of relief that Dr. Vernon saw the door close upon the wretched man, who, meeting an old acquaintance of the county jail, who had also just been released, he wheedled a half dollar from him and hastened at once to McCally's saloon.

Striding up to the bar with his head held high, Frank flung the coin down with an air of triumph and ordered the best in the house, which was promptly given. Old Joe knew that he would soon have the remaining change, but in off-hand way he casually inquired of Frank if he wished the balance to go toward the old bill.

"Not by a —— sight," replied Frank, ripping out a terrible oath. Old Joe then handed the change—forty cents—and Frank walked over to the roulette wheel and threw it on number seventeen.

The ball spun swiftly around, finally going slower and slower until at last it dropped into one of the pockets, and lo! behold, as Frank gazes, he sees he has won, and the croupier quickly counted out fourteen dollars in checks, and rings for the porter to bring drinks.

As Frank drains the contents of the glass his shaking hands become firmer, the old light flashes into his eyes, and he is for the time being the cool, calm gambler of the old days, when he was called the most reckless gamester in the State. He wins steadily, the chips in front of him grow higher and higher, and pile up until there are none left on the croupier's side of the table.

He then cashes in, but he is so drunk that he can scarcely stand, and realizing this he thrusts all the money into his pockets, staggers out of the gambling house and goes reeling down the street.

After passing a few stores he finds himself in front of the Merchants' and Lumbermen's National Bank, and stops for a moment, gazing thoughtfully at the entrance. A spark of his old self seems to possess him for a moment, and he quickly steps inside and deposits the money in Violet's name. The amount is five thousand dollars, but he never stops to count it. The cashier makes out an account book and Frank thrusts it in his pocket and with difficulty makes his way home.

Violet opened the door with a sickening sense of disgust and pity, but not observing her, and throwing himself upon the couch, he fumbles about in his pockets for his bank book and hands it to her. She opens it, and seeing the figures inside her face expresses alarm.

The drunken wretch, with the quickness which intoxicated persons sometimes exhibit, read her thoughts, and reassuringly exclaims, "You need not be afraid. I did not steal it! I've won back some of the money I lost in old Joe's saloon."

He soon sank into a drunken slumber, but after a short

time the delirium tremens seized him and he was screaming in agony and fear. The face of the girl whom he threw over the dam was ever before him. He imagined her arms were still about him to save herself from being hurled into the seething, whirling waters.

Violet, in terror, hurried over to James' office, and was fortunate enough to find both physicians in; also Tobias and Martha, who had long since left Frank's service. The imp was there, too, and they all hastened to where Frank lay, raving, cursing and begging in turns.

Little Grace was sent away that she might not witness the scene. It took the combined efforts of the four men to prevent him from doing himself an injury.

"See her! See her! See her!" he shrieked. "She is falling over the dam! Great God, Marguerite, forgive me! There, curse you, you shall never live to tell Violet how I have ruined you. I mean to make her my wife, and you shall be lying at the bottom of the river with that unborn brat of yours. There, see her, she has sunk from sight!" he excitedly cried, his voice trailing into a whisper as he raised himself in bed and nervously pointed over the foot-board. "See the dark water!" he breathed, gazing steadfastly down at the carpet, with dilating eyes and quivering nostrils. "See," he continued, breathlessly, "the waters close over her head, and no one will ever know her secret. I have nothing to fear from her now, and I am safe. Not a soul has seen me," he muttered, looking cautiously around the room. "I will hurry back home and never be suspected!"

The whole scene of that fatal night was gone over again and again, and the five persons who watched him knew that he was guilty of the murder of poor, misguided Marguerite Manning.

The two physicians at last succeeded in quieting him by the use of powerful drugs, and he finally sank into a stupor from which he did not awake for hours.

The news of Frank's delirium was carefully kept from Mrs. Vernon, who, poor soul, already had trouble enough.

The following day Elph, who was now almost a man grown, came into the office as the two doctors were discussing Frank's case and trying to discover some means with which to prevent him from drinking, even to the advisability of using drastic measures.

"Good God!" Elph heard Wilford exclaim, "suppose he should get the tremens somewhere where he might be heard by outsiders going over that scene! He would be arrested and hanged. The shock would kill your mother."

The two men were so deeply engaged in conversation that they did not hear Elph, who stood, hat in hand, waiting to be spoken to. At last he coughed slightly, and both doctors sprang to their feet in alarm, but sank back when they saw who the intruder was.

"Great heavens, what a scare!" exclaimed Wilford. "Old man, we must be more careful in the future."

After Elph greeted them James said, "What is the matter now, Elph? There appears to be something you would like to say."

"There is, sah, there is!" said Elph, seating himself. "I done got to unburden my mind, sah."

"Well, out with it, then," said Dr. Ellis; "confession is good for the soul."

"Well, it am dis way, sah. One ebening long ago I went down to the ribber fishing for bull heads, and I done climbed down one of de piers ob de dam and was fishin'. It was after dark, and bery quiet dere, and de bull heads done bite like fury dat air night. Well, sah, to come to my story, sah, just as I was thinkin' ob gittin' ready to leabe fo' home, sah, 'long come Marse Frank and Miss Marguerite. Dey was quarreling, sah, and Marse Frank he done say, 'I frow youh ober de dam if you don't do as I tole you!' Well, sah, Miss Marguerite she say, 'I'll neber do dat. I'll die befo' I'll ruin

dose two young lives.' Marse Frank, he gits in a terrible rage and say, 'Then die you shall!' and he frows her off into de dam. She screamed and Marse Frank run away. I had been sittin' very quiet and still in de shadow of a huge stile, and dey had not heard me nor seen me all dis time, sah. Marse Frank's footsteps had not died off, sah, before I jump down to sabe Miss Marguerite, but it am dark, the waters am swift and foamy, and I failed to see her. I walked up and down both banks ob de ribber, but I neber sees any trace ob Miss Marguerite. Den I runs home and goes to bed."

"But why didn't you tell everybody what you saw and have them search the river right away?" asked Dr. Vernon, sternly.

"In dem days," replied Elph, "I libed in mortal fear ob Marse Frank and I dassant say anything. Youh see," continued the poor imp, whose black countenance was working with fear, "Marse Frank done been bery cruel to me, and harsh sometimes, and I too much afeared to say anything about it, so I just keeped quiet and have neber said nothin'." And his knees were knocking together so badly that they would scarce support his trembling body.

"I reckon dey will hang me for accomplishment in de crime, but I can't help it; I just got to confess."

James and Wilford gazed at each other in silent horror for a short space of time. Here was an entirely different phase of the case.

After considering a few moments James said: "The deed is done and nothing will bring her back. For mother's sake and little Grace we must all remain silent. It will be a terrible secret to keep, but what can we do?"

"Nothing," said Wilford.

"Elph," said Dr. Vernon, "you must keep your mouth closed, and never reveal to any human being what you saw at the old mill dam."

"All right, sah. If you say, sah, I done close up like a

clam now again 'cause my conscience am relieved now and youse, of course, done knows best, sah," and bowing, the darkey withdrew.

"This is a terrible state of affairs," said Dr. Ellis, after Elph had gone. "It almost makes me feel as if I was that poor girl's murderer myself. Booh!" he exclaimed, "it gives me the jim-jams!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Arrested for Murder

One year has passed away, a year fraught with misery for Violet. Let us look in at her as she prepares the evening meal.

The husband lies upon his couch in the grip of his old enemy—liquor. The little girl, in a clean but plain little dress, alternately watches first her mother and then her father. But she need have no fear of him for hours to come, for it will take some time for the fumes of the whiskey to die away. Better for him and for all connected with him had he never aroused from that drunken stupor.

The following morning, as he went to old Joe's for his usual morning drink (he now cleans out the cuspidors and sweeps the floors for a certain amount of drinks), he met George Ashburn, an old acquaintance whom he had known in better days. George had been away from the city for several years, and was ignorant of Frank's downfall. He was deeply shocked by the appearance of the once dapper young bank cashier, clubman and society man. At first Ashburn was unable to believe the evidence of his own senses, but gradually the truth dawned upon him.

Frank wobbled up to him, and shaking him vigorously by the hand asked how his health was and where he had been and what he was now doing, and ended up by saying:

"By Jove, old man! I happen to be a little short this morning. Can you lend me a dollar till evening?"

George was glad to get off so easily and reached in his pocket for the dollar, but finding that he had no smaller change than a five handed it to Frank, saying:

"There I guess that will answer just as well."

He grabbed on the coveted bill with the eagerness of a

half-starved child. Here was drink, drink! All he wanted for an entire day.

The two parted, George Ashburn going to his hotel (he had just arrived on the morning train) and Frank to old Joe's place. Walking up to the bar, his head thrown back, he threw the money down upon the counter with the air of a millionaire, saying at the same time, "You can clean your own —— floor this morning."

At the sight of the five old Joe was politeness itself, and he set the bottle upon the bar, saying, "Well, Frank, take your first drink with me. I am a little dry myself this morning."

Frank accepted with alacrity, and then treated back, but old Joe at once dropped drinking, saying, "Thanks, Frank, I'll take a cigar this time," and helped himself to one, which he put in his pocket and replaced in the box later.

At this moment the imp came into the barroom. He had a fondness for rum, which occasionally got the best of him, and at these times, when overloaded, he always went away in some quiet nook until sober again.

Dr. Vernon, on every occasion, sternly rebuked him, and the imp solemnly swore just as often that he would never repeat the offense again.

As Elph stepped up to the bar, Frank, who was pretty well drunk by this time, invited him to have a drink, but the imp turned his back contemptuously upon him, saying, "Marse Frank, I reckon I'se able to buy my own drinks. Youh'd better go home and buy something for youh starvin' family."

Elph had more than once contributed his earnings to aid Violet, but in such a way that she never suspected from whence it came.

As the imp turned his back upon Frank, the latter shouted, "You infernal scoundrel of a black, good-for-nothing nigger, do you dare dictate to me? I'll break every bone in your black anatomy! Oh! that this was still slave-time,

that I might beat your black hide until you would be glad to beg for mercy!"

"Marse Frank, you done strike me often when I was a boy, but don't you nebber try that trick again, 'cause if youh does, I'se sure going to do youh great bodily harm!"

Frank knew that Elph would carry out his threat, and relapsed into silence, muttering something about the impudence of niggers now-a-days, while the latter calmly drank his rum in silence.

"Golly! Dat am good liker, Marse Joe. I fink I done take anudder drink." Old Joe quickly sat another bottle on the counter, and Elph quickly disposed of another glass. "Golly, Marse Joe, dat liker am gittin' better ebery minit. I done fink I has anudder one."

By this time he, too, was feeling as if he were a millionaire, and, ordering a cigar, he went to a card table and sat down to meditate upon the merits of old Joe's wet goods.

Frank drank a tremendous amount of liquor, and it began to have the effect of making him talkative, and, finally becoming boastful, he began reciting some imaginary valiant deeds he had once performed. Just as Frank finished telling about a particularly brave deed he had done, a gruff voice at his elbow thundered, "Aw, come off! That's nothin'. I once killed a man on the St. Joe River for calling me a liar!"

Frank turned quickly to look at the new speaker, who was a new arrival whom Frank, talking and gesticulating excitedly, had not seen come in. He was a large, raw-boned, burly lumberman, who was also under the influence of liquor, and not too sweet-tempered.

"Pooh!" hiccoughed Frank, not to be outdone. "I once killed a girl only because she refused to do my bidding!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the crowd, which had grown bigger as the morning advanced. "You never had the courage of a rabbit!"

"You kill anybody, indeed!" exclaimed the big lumber-

man. "You would be more likely to sit down tamely and let somebody kill you! Ha! Ha!"

"You big blundering son-of-a-gun!" exclaimed Frank, savagely. "I tell you I did kill her, and then took the officers and showed her dead body to them!"

"Will you kindly tell us what her name was?" asked a bystander, with a grin.

"Cert-in-n-ly," stuttered Frank. "The ma-jor-jor-i-ty of—of you know her well. Her name—name was Mar-Marger-Mar-gue-rite Man-Manning! I ruined her, then—then threw her over the old mill dam on—on the night of April 22, 1886, because she would not take (hiccough) part in a scheme I wished (hic) to-to carry through,"—throwing his arms before him in an excited gesture to give emphasis to his statement.

Silence fell upon the barroom for an instant, and all eyes were turned upon old William Manning, who stepped across the threshold just in time to hear Frank's last statement. Mr. Manning occasionally dropped in to get a glass of ale, but never remained long in the place. He would sip his glass of ale, saying nothing to anyone, and then quietly depart. People said that he had always been a little queer since the tragic death of his idolized daughter, and it is certain that he never quite became himself after the loss of lovely Marguerite. He did not recover from the blow, and years after he would often sit for hours brooding over her cherished memory, not speaking to anyone nor wishing to be disturbed.

Old Mr. Manning stood staring at Frank for a full minute after hearing those words pronounced, and then, with a savage cry of fury, he sprang forward like a tiger, grasped Frank by the throat and bore him to the floor. It took the united strength of the big lumberman and several others to pull him off of the nearly senseless Frank. He raved and cursed like a madman, declaring he would tear him limb from limb.

Elph, sitting at the card table, with his head in his hands, had been partly aroused upon hearing Frank declare that he had killed Marguerite. He witnessed Mr. Manning strike Frank to the floor, and then be forcibly dragged off of his prostrate body.

The tumult sharpened Elph's benumbed senses, and he sprang to his feet with a cry of terror, howling, "I done 'fess everything! I seed Marse Frank frow her into the water, and den I done tried to sabe her, 'deed I did, Mr. Manning!"

"You infernal black scoundrel! Hold your tongue! Do you want us to be hanged?" growled Frank, who was partly sobered now, and fully realized the mistake he had made, and silently cursed himself for doing so.

In all probability, had Elph not fallen on his knees and howled out those terror-stricken words, Frank's boasts would simply have been regarded as the senseless ravings of a drunken man.

"There is something more in this than appears on the surface," muttered old Joe to himself. "I heard Frank go over that scene when he had the delirium tremens. I put him in a back room and had the boys hold him there until the marshal came and got him."

Aloud he said, "Boys, I believe the drunken scoundrel really did kill that girl. I have heard him go over the scene once before. There are some of the boys here in the room now who helped me hold him in the back room when he was 'seeing things.'"

"You bet we did," said a couple of blear-eyed inhabitants of Joe's place. "We heard him go over the whole business, but thought it was one of his nightmares along with the rest."

Old Mr. Manning was still struggling with his captors when old Joe stepped from behind the bar and said, "Cease struggling, old man, and we'll pump the nigger. He is drunk now, and we can get the whole story from him. It is

our only chance, for when he's sober he's got a mouth that will close as tight as a clam when it comes to telling the family secrets of the Vernons."

"Come, nigger, own up now, and tell us what you saw at the old dam."

"I didn't see nofing," said the imp, who, like Frank, began to realize that he had made a fool of himself.

"Oh, ho! So that is the way the wind blows, is it! Manning, take my advice," continued old Joe. "Go and have them both locked up on a charge of murder. There is no doubt in my mind but what he committed the crime and the nigger either helped him or was a witness to the whole d—— affair."

"We will stick by you," said one of the two men who had helped to hold Frank in the back room upon the other occasion when having delirium tremens.

"Yes," said the other, addressing Mr. Manning, "you may count on us for part of the evidence."

"That I will!" said Mr. Manning, who now ceased struggling for the first time. "Hold them and I will swear out a warrant."

"Who's going to swear out a warrant?" asked Ted Randall, stepping across the threshold. Ted Randall is the city marshal, and a well-known character in Mt. Vernon.

"Randall, I firmly believe we have got the murderer or murderers of Marguerite Manning," said Joe.

"Do tell," drawled Randall, who was a down-east Yankee. "This do beat anything I've heerd of since old Manse, our pet cow, had twins. Well! Well! It do beat all! Wall, if they do be the murderers of that Manning girl, I reckon I'll be obliged to lock them both up. This last affair will be a sad blow to Mrs. Vernon and Doc, but duty is duty, and I must abide by my oath of office."

"Come, Vernon," he said, not unkindly, "I must lock you up again."

"It will be nothing new," growled the discomfited vil-

lain. "I've occupied every cell in the cursed building, and I guess I can stand it this time."

"And just think," said old Joe, maliciously. "Your honorable old father was the chap who donated the entire amount to construct it, and you made your boast that a safer one was never constructed in the State of Michigan."

"I'se done going to break youh head, youh good-fo'-nofin' rum-sellin' red-nosed Irishman, youh ebber say a word 'bout my ole dead master!"

"Good for you, Elph!" shouted the crowd. "Old man Vernon was the best man we ever had in this here town."

"Old Joe," continued one of the men, "is a little sore because the old gent threatened to close him up. He was once or twice caught red-handed rifling the pockets of some of the boys who came in from the woods with a month's wages in their pockets. He used to get them drunk and put them in the back room, take their money and then swear that some one else had robbed them."

Old Joe knew this was true, and, seeing his mistake, he apologized and called up the house to drink at his expense, a very unusual thing, indeed.

All drank except Elph and Mr. Manning, who left their glasses untouched.

"What's the matter, nigger?" asked a lumberman. "Has the thoughts of roosting in the calaboose to-night scared away all your thirst?"

Elph seized the glass, dashed it upon the floor, where it burst into a thousand pieces, exclaiming, "I'se nebber, nebber going to touch dat stuff no mo', 'cause I done betrayed what Marse James made me swear to keep silent."

"So, so! The doctor is mixed up in this affair also," chuckled old Joe. "This promises to be rich indeed!"

Poor Elph had made another fatal blunder and saw his mistake when it was too late.

"Marse Randall, lock me up and hang me! I'se not fit to libe any mo'! To fink I would do dis! I can nebber look

Marse James in de face again! He would just look sad and say nofin' mean or bad to me. I jes' wanna be hung now!"

"Elph," said Randall, "I believe you have the whitest heart in you I ever see, and, d—— me, I will resign before I'll lock you up in that d—— dungeon. I don't believe you are guilty of any wrong-doing, although you seem to be acquainted with some of the facts in the case."

"That's right, Randall," chorused the crowd. "Elph is true blue, even if he is a nigger, and if he promises not to run away, you can gamble on it that he will be found when wanted!"

"What do you say, Manning?" asked Randall, turning to the father of Marguerite.

"I say, let him go. I don't believe he had a thing to do with my daughter's death. That infernal scoundrel has got him mixed up in it in some way probably to shield himself."

"Thank you, Mr. Manning. You have relieved me of a painful duty. I don't mind locking the other one up, except when I think of his poor mother and those near to him.

"Boys, when my little gal had the diphtheria some years ago and my old lady lying sick and helpless on her back, I cut my foot in the lumber woods and was unable to work, besides being head over heels in debt.

"Wall, the young doctor came down to the house when he heard of it, cured the old woman and my little gal, and his dear old mother just watched beside them 'ere sick ones until they got well. And now to think it must be my hand that places her son behind the bars, perhaps forever. Boys, it don't seem right! I didn't mind locking him up before because I felt I was doing him and everyone else a service, but it is different now!"

"I'll tell you what you can do, Randall," said our old acquaintance, the big burly lumberman. "Before he can be locked up upon a charge of murder a warrant must be sworn out by Mr. Manning. Watch the prisoner while Manning goes and swears out a wararnt, and do you make your-

self scarce for a while. The sheriff will then probably come and take the prisoner himself."

"Say, Mr. Lumberman, you ought to be a lawyer instead of an axeman. Why, dern my boot-tops, if you don't look jest like one!"

"Yes, Randall. I was once the most promising young lawyer in the State of Illinois, but rum was my master, and I sacrificed home, parents, friends, the girl who loved me, ambition—everything, for that cursed stuff called rum! I left home and came to the lumber woods of Michigan to try and get away from temptation. I have partly succeeded in downing the old enemy, but occasionally I fail and become a boasting fool, a jibbering idiot, as you witnessed but a short while ago."

A moment's silence followed this somewhat lengthy speech, and then Manning addressed the lumberman, saying, "Stranger, you are all right. I will act upon your advice and go at once to swear out the warrant."

The news spread through the city like wild fire that Frank Vernon, once the cashier of the Savings Bank and partner in the Vernon Mercantile Lumber and Banking Company, now the city drunkard, is behind the bars upon the terrible charge of murdering beautiful young Marguerite Manning.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Trial

The coming trial caused widespread comment, owing to the prisoner's once high social position.

The newspapers took up the case, some of the most diligent reporters even going back to the history of his forefathers and following up his ancestry and history up to the time of the trial.

His wife, it was stated, had been but wife in name only for the past year. She had learned his horrible secret from his drunken mutterings, but for her child's sake she had kept the terrible secret locked up in her own bosom.

His brother, one of the most skillful physicians in the State, was also aware of the wretched man's crime, having learned of it in the same manner as the broken-hearted wife.

His mother, it was stated, was completely prostrated, and seldom left the home occupied by herself and youngest son, the doctor.

The sister of the accused man, "Dr. Ellis's wife," was in constant attendance upon the mother, who it was feared would never leave the bed which she had taken to when the news reached her of her son's terrible crime.

It was also stated that there was no possible doubt concerning his guilt, as a negro servant had been a witness to the whole terrible scene, but had kept silent through fear and the desire to help his young master.

The best lawyers in the State were to be obtained. The wife had about four thousand dollars left from an amount of money the accused had won at a gaming table.

The husband had won the money while drunk, and had deposited it in a bank in his wife's name and forgot the transaction immediately after.

His friends at the saloon had told him about it several times, but he had always regarded their words as a banter, and paid no attention to the matter.

The wife was now using the money in an attempt to save her husband from the gallows for her little daughter's sake.

It was rumored that some great lawyer from Illinois was to make the plea which it was hoped would save his neck at least from the hangman's noose. Who he was no one seemed to know, and as the day of the trial approached the excitement became intense.

The feeble old father and mother of the dead girl were determined that the destroyer of their daughter should not go unpunished.

The saddest feature of the case was the fact that Dr. Vernon, brother of the accused man, had once saved the life of their son at the risk of his own.

The rescue was made before the crime was committed by the brother. The lad was eleven years of age at the time, but was now attending the University of Ann Arbor at the doctor's expense, who hoped to make him a physician.

The affection between the doctor and the lad was very strong, which, said the newspapers, made the case one of the saddest and most complicated the State had ever been confronted with.

When the case came to trial, the father of the murdered girl was the first witness put on the stand.

He related how his daughter had complained of feeling ill on the night of April 22, 1886, and had gone to her room, as he supposed, to retire, and of his going to work early the following morning in the Vernon Saw Mill, and then learning of her absence a few hours later; how they had searched the woods and river, finally finding her dead body in the Chippewa River, several miles below the mill dam.

As the old man concluded his narrative, the prosecutor arose and said, "You are the father of the murdered girl, Marguerite Manning, are you not?"

The counsel for the defense was on his feet instantly, and, before the old man could reply, he said, "I object, your Honor, on the ground that it has not been proven that she was murdered."

"The objection is sustained," said the Judge. "Please refer to the dead girl as Marguerite Manning."

"As your Honor wishes. I merely wished to impress upon the minds of the jurymen how she came to her death."

The counsel for the accused again sprang to his feet, accusing the prosecution of trying to influence the minds of the jury, who, he declared, were all intelligent men, capable in every way of following the facts of the case without the aid of the prosecution.

The Judge rapped impatiently on his desk, declaring he would fine them both if they did not cease wrangling.

"Did you ever have any reason to suspect that your daughter had any motive to destroy herself?" was the next question asked by the prosecution.

The old man was visibly affected by the question, but replied:

"None whatever."

"Did she have a lover or keep company with any one?"

"She used to meet Frank Vernon down by the river nearly every night for a long period preceding her death."

"Did the accused ever come to the home to see her?"

"I object. The question is immaterial and of no consequence," said the counsel for the defense.

"The objection is overruled. The witness may answer the question."

"Did the accused ever come to the house to see your daughter?" the prosecution again asked.

"Never."

"You are quite sure of that?"

"Yes, because myself and wife both remonstrated with her, telling her she was jeopardizing her reputation by meeting him thus."

"What did your daughter say when you tried to dissuade her from meeting the accused?"

"She replied that she loved him and that she would meet him, cost her what it may."

"Did you ever have reason to believe that the accused had any reason to wish her death?"

"Never until yesterday."

"What are your reasons for believing that he wished her death since yesterday?"

"Susanne Rothford, a woman who is slowly dying of consumption and remorse, sent me a note yesterday begging that I come over to her home and see her. When I arrived she said she had a secret on her mind and had good reason to believe that Frank Vernon threw my daughter over the mill dam."

This last statement caused a stir in the court room, and for a moment consternation showed plainly on the faces of the counsel for the defense, and they hastily held a consultation among themselves.

Here was an unexpected blow from the prosecution that put a different phase on the case.

"That is all," said the prosecutor, with a satisfied look on his face as he looked across the table at the array of lawyers arraigned against him.

The chief counsel for the defense now arose and prepared to break down the mountain of damaging testimony which the prosecution had piled up. He was none other than the black-whiskered lumberman who had come into old Joe's saloon on the day when Frank made the fatal admission which now threatened to send him to the gallows.

The keen-eyed lawyer for the defendant looked but little like the former lumberman. His black beard was now carefully and stylishly trimmed, and he wore well-fitting garments that showed his finely-knit figure to the best advantage, and his fellow lawyers addressed him as Mr. Blackwood.

His black eyes fairly shone as he began to question the old man.

"Who was the first person to discover your daughter's body after the accident on April 22, 1886?" was the first question he put to Mr. Manning.

"Frank Vernon, the man who killed her," came the prompt reply.

"Was he alone when he discovered the body?"

"No."

"Please state for the benefit of the jury who was with him when the discovery was made, also whether they are in this court room at the present time."

"Three of them are in this court room."

"Where is the fourth?"

"He was killed in a railroad wreck about a year ago."

"That is all for the present," said Mr. Blackwood.

Turning to the jury, he said, in his most impressive manner, "Gentlemen of the jury, please remember that the father of this poor unfortunate girl who accidentally fell into the Chippewa River on that fatal night, has most positively stated that it was the accused who was the first one to find his daughter."

The man got down from the stand with a sigh of relief, and the mother was called.

She had to be assisted to the witness stand, and related much the same story as her husband had.

She told how she had gone to her daughter's room the following morning to call her, and, receiving no answer, opened the bed-room door and saw that the bed had not been slept in during the night. Seeing the bed-room window wide open, she had gone over to it and seen the footprints of Marguerite in the soft earth.

The prosecution then asked her a few questions and turned her over to the defense.

"Madame, how do you know that those footprints were made by your daughter?"

"I would know her footprints among a thousand. When she was a little child she fell out of a wagon and injured her leg in such a manner that her left foot always turned slightly inward, but not enough to be observed unless one watched her very carefully."

The old lady was now allowed to leave the stand. She was in almost a fainting condition, and the Judge advised Mr. Manning and his wife to go home, saying that he would send for them if necessary.

The brother of the dead girl was the next to be called to the stand, and the prosecutor ended his questions by asking the witness if he too had seen the footsteps on the soft soil on the ground underneath the window.

"I fail to see what bearing her footsteps have on this case," said Mr. Blackwood when the prosecutor had sat down."

"You seem to be extremely dull this morning, Brother Blackwood," said the prosecutor.

"One could hardly be otherwise, considering the company I am now keeping."

"Do you mean to cast insinuations?" exclaimed the prosecutor, angrily.

"Gentlemen! gentlemen! Cease this wrangling or I will fine you both," exclaimed the Judge, impatiently, and, knocking on the desk with his gavel.

The spectators were all laughing at the two lawyers, who were constantly wrangling with each other, and the Judge threatened to clear the court room unless better order was kept.

The prosecutor was known as a great wit, but he had met his match at last, and the crowd enjoyed his discomfiture immensely.

Elph was the next witness called to the stand, and as he raised his hand and swore to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he muttered to himself,

"I reckon I won't tell the Jedge no lies to-day, 'cause I ain't going to tell nofing I seen dare dat night."

"What is your full name?" he was asked.

"Elphram Washington Lincoln Grant Sherman Vernon, sah," said the imp innocently.

"Is that your full name?"

"Yes, sah."

Laughter in the court room.

"Silence!" roared the Judge.

"How old are you?"

"Sah?" said the imp, interrogatively.

"How old are you?"

"I 'spect I'se somewhere between the age of twenty and forty, sah."

"Do you mean to say that you don't know how old you are?"

"Not 'zactly, sah. You see, it am dis way. I was a berry small child when I was born, and my memory was not as good den as it am now."

"The fellow is either a complete fool, or else he is an exceedingly smart fellow," muttered the Judge under his breath. Aloud he said, "You may question the witness, Mr. Prosecutor."

The prosecutor now arose and began to question him. A great deal depended on the testimony of Elph, and he resolved to proceed very carefully. In his blandest manner, he said:

"Mr. Vernon, you were born in this State, were you not?"

"Yes, sah. In dis berry town, sah."

"You are, then, a citizen of the United States, are you not?"

"No, sah, I'se a colored gentleman, I is."

More laughter in the court room.

"You are, nevertheless, a citizen of the United States, are you not?"

"I don't know, but I done reckon I am, dough."

"Now, Mr. Vernon, you have lived a long time in Mt. Vernon, I believe you said?"

"All my life, sah."

"You, of course, then, know the defendant in this case, do you not?"

Elph was getting suspicious now, and resolved to answer very carefully.

"Do you mean Marse Frank Vernon, sah?"

"Yes, Mr. Vernon."

"I does, sah."

"Do you recall one night in 1886, April 22, I believe the date was?"

"No, sah."

"Did you not go fishing for bullheads down by the dam on that particular evening?"

"Don't remember nofing," muttered the imp.

"Try again. Think hard," said the prosecutor.

"See here, Marse Judge, Jury and Prosecutor, dis here nigger ain't drunk to-day, and I done know what I am saying. I ain't going to tell one d——n thing I see or didn't see dat air night or any other night. Youse can hang me or send me to jail if you want to, but tain't no use to ask me any fudder questions, 'cause I done going to close up like an oyster shell.

"When I comed into dis court room dis morning and seed my missis' pretty pale face, I says to myself, Look heah, you good-foh-nofing nigger, you ain't going to say nofing 'bout Marse Frank, 'cause it will break de poor old Missis' heart, and no Jedge or jury ain't going to make you, nedder."

After making this emphatic speech, Elph closed up like a clam, and no amount of coaxing, threatening or reasoning could induce him to utter another word.

After wasting nearly an hour in a futile attempt to make him divulge what he knew, the Judge finally gave up in

despair, and ordered him to be locked up for contempt of court.

As the faithful black fellow was led away to jail, there was more than one moist eye in the court room.

As the jailor passed Mrs. Vernon with the prisoner, she arose from her seat, and, grasping his hand, she murmured, softly, "God bless you, Elph!"

The look in the poor fellow's eyes showed that he felt more than repaid for any punishment the law might inflict upon him.

Mr. Blackwood was the next witness to take the stand.

"Mr. Blackwood, what is your business?" asked the prosecutor.

"I am a lawyer, sir," replied Mr. Blackwood.

"Have you practiced long in Michigan, may I ask?"

"You may ask what you please."

"Answer my question."

"Not unless his Honor commands me."

"You need not answer the question," said the Judge.

"The question has no bearing on the case whatever."

"You are a great drunkard, I believe," said the prosecutor.

"You may believe what you please," answered Mr. Blackwood.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, cease this useless wrangling or I shall be obliged to fine you both," said the Judge.

"You were in Joe McCally's saloon on the day the accused was heard to boast that he killed Marguerite Manning, were you not?"

"I was in Joe McCally's saloon on the day the accused was arrested, but don't recall hearing him confess anything."

"You were very drunk that day, were you not?"

"Yes, sir."

Laughter in the court room.

"Are you drunk to-day?"

"No, sir."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, cease this wrangling or I shall fine you both," said the Judge, pounding on his desk with his gavel.

"You say that you were in Joe McCally's saloon on the day the accused was arrested?" said the prosecutor, resuming his questions.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you not hear the accused say he killed Marguerite Manning because she would not do his bidding?"

"My dear fellow-lawyer, you must recall the fact that I was very drunk that day; in fact, I was in such a beastly state of intoxication that I don't remember a thing that took place after I entered the saloon."

The prosecutor saw that he had been beaten at his own game, and growled out, "You knew enough to plan a way for the marshal to avoid arresting the accused."

"If I did, I was so drunk that I can't recall it," said Mr. Blackwood.

"That is all the questions I wish to ask you," snapped the prosecutor.

He was then questioned by his partner in behalf of the defense, and managed by shrewd answers to throw a favorable light upon the case.

The next day, Susanne was brought into the court room on a stretcher. The mark of death was upon her countenance, and it was plainly apparent that she had but a few more weeks in which to live.

She was sworn and asked to relate what took place between Frank Vernon and herself.

She told of her hopeless passion for James and of their plot to make James a villain in the eyes of Violet, and how during one of their secret meetings he had been slightly intoxicated and boasted of having got rid of the other one, meaning Marguerite Manning, and then of denying it afterwards.

She concluded by saying, "I have got but a few more

weeks in which to live, and it is the statement of a dying girl that Frank Vernon killed Marguerite Manning."

Susanne then sank back in an almost fainting condition, and the attorneys, out of sheer pity, allowed her to be taken from the room without cross-questioning her, as nothing could be gained by either side by detaining her.

Blackwood thought that the utmost they could possibly do would be to secure a life sentence, and he and his fellow-lawyers set to work to accomplish this end.

The evidence was all in at last, and the prosecutor arose to his feet and addressed the jury thus:

"Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard all the evidence in the case; heard how this red-handed murderer met this young and trusting girl, made her love him probably by promises of marriage, and then, seeing a fairer face, he resolved to get rid of her that he might marry the woman who is now his wife. Fancy, gentlemen of the jury, how he, by some secret signs known only to himself and the girl, must have enticed her to the old dam, and then, believing himself unseen, seized her and tried to throw her into the cold, dark waters below.

"Gentlemen of the jury, the accused is not a physically strong man; never was, and that struggle must have lasted several minutes. Fancy that poor, helpless girl struggling in the dark for her life and being forced inch by inch nearer and nearer that fatal spot; of her last mad struggles, her pitiful pleadings as nearer and nearer the fiend forced her, until she was tottering on the very brink of that mad, rushing, cold water, and then of him, with a last supreme effort free himself from her clinging grasp, and then, with a last desperate effort, thrust her over! over! into that boiling, seething maelstrom!"

"Good God!" shrieked Frank, at this moment. "Don't! don't! for God's sake, don't."

He cowered and glared at the prosecuting attorney like a wild beast.

"See the murderer!" he thundered. "I have described his horrible crime just as it actually took place. See him cower and glower like a wild beast at bay! Gentlemen of the jury, my life would not be safe for an instant if he was free. Even now his hands are twitching and aching for another victim.

"Fancy if you can the mad fear of that poor, murdered girl's mother as she knocks on the door the next morning, and, receiving no answer, she opens the door and goes within! Let us follow her step by step as she opens the door and sees the bed unoccupied, and, running to the open window, sees the footprints of her darling child leading toward the old mill dam, and then, gentlemen, fancy if you can how the poor old father must have felt when the news reached him.

"Only the night before he had kissed her good-night and seen her enter her little bed-room, and then in the morning, he walks on tiptoe past her room that he might not awaken her when he went to work.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he thundered forth, "all the noise this side of Hades could not have awakened her then, for she was at the bottom of the Chippewa River! dead! dead! and by him whose hand should have been the first to shield and protect her.

"If he did not commit the deed, then how did he know just where to find her? Why did not some of the other searchers find her? You ask why he was the first to discover the dead body of the girl whom he had so foully murdered. I answer that he fancied that would be the safest way to divert suspicion from himself.

"If we could have forced that negro to have spoken, he would have told this learned jury word for word the crime I have just described. Does not the prisoner's very attitude speak plainer than words his damnable guilt?

"Gentlemen, look at him; look at him well, as he sits there writhing in agony and fear as his crime has been un-

erringly described, and can you doubt for an instant how poor, pretty Marguerite Manning came to her death?

"Now, gentlemen," he continued in a lower tone, "I know some of you, perhaps all of you, are fathers. Is it safe to let such a man as this go at large among young and innocent girls? Look at his record for the past few years! What is it?

"Drunkenness and a long life of jail sentences. Should he be spared for his wife's sake? Should he be spared for his little daughter's sake?

"I answer, No! 'Ten thousand times no!

"The only peace and safety that his wife and child knew was when he was locked up behind the iron bars. I say he ought to be hanged and it is the duty of every father on this jury to say so.

"Now, gentlemen, in conclusion I will say, do your duty. If you find the accused is not guilty of this terrible crime then turn him loose and find out who did.

"If, on the other hand, you find him guilty, then it is your duty to hang him, in accordance with the laws of this great State."

He then sat down, and the vast throng in the court room, with one breath, breathed a sigh of relief.

The prosecuting attorney had fairly carried the crowd along with him by his eloquence and fervor.

Attorney Blackwood for the defense now arose, and, in a calm voice addressed the jury as follows:

"Gentlemen of the jury, I know that you are twelve good and true men. You have been chosen from among a score or more of intelligent men, and I know you will decide this case on its own merits according to the evidence introduced.

"The prosecutor has bulldozed, threatened and called the defendant in this case a red-handed murderer! Think of it, gentlemen! A red-handed murderer! And on what grounds? None whatever. Because that poor, unfortunate young girl went to bed sick one night and was drowned on

that same evening, is that any indication that my client is responsible for her death? I say no.

"The poor girl was evidently very ill, probably with brain fever, or something equally as bad, and was out of her head. She went to her room, which, being very hot and close, caused her to throw up her window as high as possible in order to get the fresh, pure evening air. She probably sat down near the window and, tempted by the beautiful night and pure air, she leaped lightly out of the window and paced up and down for a while outside. Her head in all probability grew worse, and she wandered farther away from the house. What is more natural than that she should turn her unconscious footsteps toward the river? She wandered to the dam, probably attracted there by the noise, or some other equally simple cause. She wandered too close and accidentally fell into the rushing waters.

"The roar of the falling waters would drown her feeble cries for help, and she was carried swiftly down the stream.

"Gentlemen, the most of you have been residents of Mt. Vernon a long time, and you can all recall accidents of this kind. Why, only last summer Ralph Montgomery, the young son of one of our foremost merchants, fell into the river just below the dam, and was carried even farther down the river than Marguerite Manning, who fell into the river on that fatal night of April 22, 1886.

"Gentlemen, does it look reasonable that Frank Vernon, whom the learned prosecutor himself has said was a physically weak man, could have struggled for such a long length of time with a strong young woman, in the prime of life? Would not her loud cries for assistance speedily have brought help?

"Gentlemen," he thundered forth, warming up to his subject, "such an intelligent body of men as you are cannot help but see the utter impossibility and folly of the flimsy web of circumstantial evidence which the prosecution has piled up.

"Did not Frank Vernon himself organize a body of searchers, and was he not the most active to search for the missing girl? Was it not his own hands that pulled her from the river and restored all that was mortal of her to her bereaved parents? I appeal to you as men of intelligence, of reason and of judgment to tell me whether that was the act of a guilty man or not?

"Would a guilty man have taken them to the very spot that would reveal his crime? I thunder forth to heaven, No! a thousand times no!

"As for that unfortunate scene in the bar-room the other day, I say it was the senseless words of a drunken man who knew not what he said.

"Did I not (I am told) boast that I killed a man? I have no recollection of making that statement. It is to my shame that I relate my actions on that day, but if I made such a foolish boast, then why not he? If he should be tried for his life because of uttering those thoughtless drunken words, then I am equally guilty, and should also be tried for my life.

"The poor, ignorant colored man, who was locked up the other day, refused to open his mouth—because why? I say it was simply because he was bullied and frightened by the learned prosecutor, who took advantage of the fact in order to make things look worse for the accused. He refused to open his mouth because he did not want to wrong his employers further by his ignorant remarks, such as he made in the saloon the other day.

"Let us look backward for a few years, for instance, 1886. Did not Dr. Vernon, brother of the accused man save the life of this poor girl's brother at the immediate risk of his own? Let us look back at that scene, which is still fresh in the memory of many of the older inhabitants of this city. We find ourselves on the banks of this self-same river which Marguerite fell into. We are surrounded by thousands of

people who have come to witness the annual spring launching of the logs. As we sit there a gun is fired, which is a signal to open the great gates of the reservoir and let the logs shoot through them on their way to Saginaw.

"Great logs are seen to shoot through the narrow opening and a mighty cheer goes up from the great multitude of spectators as they behold the monarchs of the forest shoot the narrow gates with the speed of an express train.

"But what is that? A little child springs out upon the quivering dam; it stands on the very edge of the great sluice gates and claps its hands gleefully as the great logs shoot through beneath his very feet.

"A dozen brawny sons of the woods spring out upon the dam to pull the child back to safety. The foremost almost reaches him, when lo! a great log is seen to rear itself on end and then fall with crushing force upon the sluice gates at the very feet of the child.

"The force of the log causes the gates to almost give way, and they quiver, causing the child to sway this way and then that way, and finally, losing its balance, it falls headforemost into the rushing water. A great cry of horror goes up from the vast throng of watchers, and the sister of the child wildly cries for some one to save him.

"The brawny woodsmen falter and turn back. To leap into that seething, boiling water means to court almost certain death. The sister of the child screams again for some one to save him, and would have rushed into the water herself had she not been seized and held back. It seems that no one will dare to take the fearful chances, but just then a lithe form is seen to spring out upon the dam, throwing off outer garments as he ran.

"Like a tiger he leaps into the foaming current and tries to swim towards the drowning boy. But can he reach him? It is now a matter of chance, for no swimmer, no matter how strong he might be, could alter his course a particle.

But just as the drowning child sinks from view for the third time, the hand of the daring rescuer comes in contact with the little fellow's head, and the child is for the time safe.

"But with all of his great strength the swimmer is unable to make the least headway in the whirling circle of water which gradually draws himself and his unconscious burden nearer and nearer a whirling vortex of water that plunges downward like a funnel, drawing huge logs down with it. When the logs reappear they are a great distance down the stream, and no human being could ever go down in that whirlpool and come out alive. Even should he escape the terrible whirlpool, he has but one chance in a thousand of escaping being crushed to death between the logs which strike together with a force that peels the bark off and sends the splinters flying off into his face in showers.

"He is fast growing exhausted, and his efforts are growing weaker, and he seems to nearly sink from view. Nearer and nearer he is drawn toward the funnel-shaped hole, and just as he is about to be drawn under, a great pine log strikes him a fearful blow; but he manages to clamber up on it with his limp and unconscious burden, one arm hanging helplessly by his side.

"The huge log he is astride of is the same one which so nearly crushed the great sluice gates. The struggle between the whirlpool and the giant of the forest is tremendous. The log disappears from view at intervals, but only for an instant at a time.

"Sometimes it spins around like a top as if trying to shake off its human burden, but lo! just as the great log is directly over the vortex for the hundredth time the current changes for an instant and the log is thrown with great violence clear of the whirlpool, and is shot like an arrow down stream. The crowd looks with bated breath. Surely he must have loosened his hold that time, for it seems that no human being could have had the strength and endurance to cling to that shooting monster as it plows through a sea

of foam! But he is there in the same position, and, wonder of wonders! he still has the child.

"But the danger is by no means past yet. The stream becomes narrower a few hundred feet below the dam, and there is a sharp bend in the river. Here is where the greatest danger lies. The logs have become wedged at this point and formed a great jam, fully forty feet in height. The high banks on either side hem the water in, and until it makes a cataract over which the logs shoot with great velocity.

"To go over this cataract means to be crushed to death, and, making a desperate effort, he gains an upright position on the log, holding his unconscious burden in his one good arm. His only chance of life now lies in his being able to gain the shore before he reaches the great jam. To do this he must make his way by leaping from one log to another when they come close enough together. But will he be able to accomplish this before it is too late?

"Less than six hundred feet now intervene between himself and certain death, and the logs are moving with the speed of an express train. Closer and closer the logs close together as the stream becomes narrower, and in a short time he stands upon the nearest log, which is within six feet of the shore.

"Gathering himself for a desperate effort, he leaps, but, hampered by the child, he cannot quite reach it, and falls back into the rushing waters. But another log, rushing down from above, is soon within his reach, and he manages to clamber upon it and make his way within a few feet of the shore, when the jam is reached.

"He has made an excellent fight for life, but it now seems that all his efforts have been made in vain. The log, with its precious burden, is whirling tantalizingly near the shore, but just out of reach. It was now too late to plunge into the water and try to swim the few remaining feet, as he would have been swept down instantly by the undertow and be

ground to death. Nearer and nearer they are swept toward the fatal precipice, until the front end of the log strikes the jam with a crash, swings sideways across the narrow opening in the center of the jam, and in an instant is swept beneath the surface, but not before the daring rescuer has leaped upon the tossing logs, where he makes his way from one to another, now falling upon his hands and knees, sometimes crawling upon his hands and knees, but slowly and surely making his way to shore and safety.

"Once a giant log, caught like a wedge, snaps in twain like a jackstraw, the splinters striking him in the face and knocking him down, while a great cry of horror goes up from the watchers. But he is up again in an instant, the blood flowing down his face and into his eyes, nearly blinding him, but a few more jumps take him close to the shore, and a dozen willing hands are stretched forth to render assistance, and just in time. Exhausted nature would stand no more, and he sinks fainting into the arms of a brawny woodman, his precious burden still clasped in his one strong arm.

"They are tenderly carried under the shade of a great oak tree, and a doctor bends over them and soon brings the rescuer to consciousness, but it is many hours before the little one is brought to consciousness, as it has swallowed a great quantity of water.

"The brave rescuer is found to have sustained a broken arm and many cuts and bruises, but the doctor cheerfully announces that there is no serious danger if the patient has good care and nursing.

"A vehicle is quickly procured, and rescuer and rescued are quickly taken home.

"Gentlemen of the jury, shall I tell you the name of that brave rescuer? It was James Vernon, Mt. Vernon's most skillful and benevolent doctor. And who was the rescued? It was the little brother of Marguerite Manning, and

the sister who made that pitiful cry for some one to save her little brother was she.

"Was there one single man among that vast throng who was brave enough to risk his life in that terrible maelstrom? Yes, there was one, just one man among that crowd of thousands who dared take the fearful chances, and that is the brother of the accused.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I appeal to you as men of reason, as men of justice and intelligence, could the brother of such a noble man have deliberately taken the life of that poor girl? I cry to heaven that it is impossible that he could have committed such a dastardly crime as the learned prosecutor has just described. This same boy has been educated, and is even now a student of the University of Ann Arbor at the joint expense of the two brothers.

"Now, gentlemen of the jury, I have laid before you the full facts of this case, and I know that you will decide it on its merits alone. If you find the prisoner guilty of this horrible crime, then it is your duty to convict him; but if, on the other hand, you find him innocent, as I fully believe you will, then it is your duty to order his release and find the person who did commit this terrible crime, if a crime has been committed. But it is my firm belief that there has been no crime committed, for I believe that poor, unfortunate girl wandered to the dam that night and accidentally fell into the water."

He then sat down amid a silence that was painful. The picture he had drawn was so realistic, so true to life that the spectators in the court room had been held spellbound by his wonderful eloquence and masterful delivery.

There was not a dry eye in the court room. The Judge pulled out his handkerchief in a pretense of wiping his nose, but in reality to wipe away the tears from his eyes.

He asked the accused man if he had anything to say in his own behalf, but he said No, and the Judge then instructed

the jury, and they filed out of the court room and remained out for twenty-six hours. They then returned to the court room, and the prisoner was again brought back.

"Have you reached a decision yet?" asked the Judge.

"We have," replied the foreman.

"What is your verdict, gentlemen?"

"We could not agree. Part held out for partial conviction and some for acquittal."

The Judge, who was an old jurist, shook his head and said it was against the very evidence shown in the case, and was caused by the marvellous eloquence of the lawyer for the defendant.

The next day Mr. Blackwood got gloriously drunk, and was locked up on a charge of disturbing the peace.

Alas! what a sad ending of one of the greatest pleas that had ever been made in a court room. People said it was a shame that such a man would recklessly throw away the chances of a great career.

A new trial was, of course, ordered, but the liquor-loving silver-tongued Blackwood was not present at the second trial. He had served his jail sentence and then disappeared like a shadow, no one knew where.

The trial was before a different Judge this time, and the clever prosecutor did not have so much opposition, and the verdict was "Guilty of murder in the first degree."

As he had already had one trial, the laws of the State forbade that the extreme penalty be carried out. He was sentenced to serve at hard labor in the Jackson prison for the rest of his natural life.

CHAPTER XX.

Condemned to Prison for Life

The day before Frank Vernon was taken to the great prison at Jackson the sheriff gave all his relatives and friends a last chance to see and converse with him.

But, alas! there was not one friend who cared to see him, although all of his relatives came to say a last sad farewell to the wretched man who was once Mt. Vernon's most promising business man and promoter.

His relatives came in a body. He was now really sober, although suffering the torments of the damned from his wild craving for liquor.

Dr. Vernon did everything in his power to alleviate his sufferings by the use of powerful opiates.

He greeted all of his relatives with his old-time courtesy, for he was a gentleman when in his proper senses. He was perfectly resigned to his fate, and talked to them quite calmly concerning his future life. They promised to write to him as often as the prison rules permitted.

The last farewell was taken of each member of the family until he came to little Gracie. She did not understand all this ceremony and asked her Uncle Dim why he didn't pay her papa's fine, like he used to, so he could get out of the horrid jail.

"My little daughter, he cannot do so this time," said Frank, sinking into a chair and taking the little one on his lap. "I am going on a long, long journey to-morrow, and it will be a long time before I return, and while I am gone you must be very, very good to mamma. She and you will go and live with grandma and Uncle Dim in the big house at Greenwold." (James had bought back the home.)

"If you are going to be gone ever so long then I will write you nice long letters, and you can read them; but if you are

going so awful far away, why don't you take mamma and I along with you?"

A spasm of pain contracted the features of the condemned man as he said, "It is so awful far that you and mamma couldn't possibly go."

"But what makes you go then? Don't you love mamma and I any more?"

"God knows that I do, now that it is too late."

"But, papa, it is not too late, because you have not started yet, and Uncle Dim will pay your fine, won't you, Uncle Dim?" she said, coaxingly.

She had heard the words, "paying a fine," so often that she had an idea that all that was required was to give the bad man who locked her papa up some money and then he would be released at once.

"My dear," said Dr. Vernon, "I would pay his fine gladly if I could, but he must go on a long journey and I can do nothing—nothing!"

The time was fast approaching for them to take their departure, and it was with a feeling of relief that all saw the hands of the clock in the jail point to the even hour, which indicated that it was time they must go. Each moment only made the parting more grievous and embarrassing to all.

As the mother looked into her son's eyes for the last time she expected to see him without a felon's stripes on, she handed him a small Bible and said:

"My son, try to alter your life from this day forth, and when behind those cold, gray prison walls try to teach those poor, misguided inmates the words and love of Him who was crucified that man might be cleansed from all sin. Let the little Bible I just gave you be your comforter and guide."

"Mother," he said, "I cannot believe or do as you wish. I cannot believe the words of this little book, but I will take it and cherish it ever because it is a present from my mother, the mother whom I have ever been a source of trouble and disgrace to."

"Not so, my son," she said, bursting into tears at last; "whatever your faults have been you have ever been a kind son to me."

She had borne up bravely until it came to the actual parting. Her mother's heart was full to overflowing, and she could stand no more, and she fainted and was caught in Frank's arms.

"Here, brother, take care of her," he said, kissing her pale, cold lips.

"Good-bye, Violet," he said, sorrowfully, kissing her on the brow.

"Lock me up, jailer," he said, turning to the turnkey. "Mother must not come to her senses again in this place."

As the jailer and Frank reached the great iron door that led to the cells, he turned backward for a moment and called out:

"Good-bye, all; the next time you see me it won't be in prisoner's stripes, for I swear that no prison on the face of the earth will ever hold me. I will make my escape, and when I do no living man will ever take me alive."

After taking this oath he waved his hand at them and disappeared through the great iron door, and as they carried his unconscious mother out in the warm sunshine they heard the great iron door of the county jail close with a clang upon the man who had just sworn that no bolts or iron bars were strong enough to hold him.

"I believe he will keep his oath," said Dr. Vernon. "When we were boys I can remember how he used to construct imaginary jails and place prisoners within them and then devise ways for them to make their escape. Even in late years I have heard him boast quite frequently that no prison could ever hold him very long."

"I am afraid he will find out his mistake," said Dr. Ellis, "I have never heard of a prisoner escaping from the great Jackson prison."

In the meantime both doctors had been busily applying

restoratives to bring Mrs. Vernon to consciousness, and at this moment she opened her eyes with a sigh, and the conversation was dropped for the time being.

Mrs. Vernon, Mary, Violet and little Gracie were assisted into the carriage and driven to Dr. Vernon's home.

Dr. Vernon, Dr. Ellis and Mary then walked to the two physicians' office.

A consultation was held, and it was definitely decided that Violet and her little daughter would in the future make their home with Dr. Vernon.

Mrs. Vernon was growing quite feeble, and Dr. Vernon felt that she needed the companionship of some one who could be at home more than he was, and besides the prattling of the child would serve to divert her mind somewhat and prevent her in a measure from brooding over her wayward son, whom fate had decreed she would never in life gaze upon again.

When next she was to see him it would be in death, but that same mysterious fate which guides all our lives mercifully drew a curtain over the future and left her the small consolation of thinking that she could at least see him at long intervals, even though he wore a felon's garb.

She received letters from him quite often, and in them he only pictured the brighter side of prison life, so that in time she felt that he was better off after all where the old enemy—liquor—could not reach him.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Escape of the Lifer

Let us follow the course of Frank's life as on the following day he is led forth from the county jail to the one-thirty train, which is to bear him to the living tomb to which he has been condemned to spend the rest of his natural life.

He is handcuffed tightly to a couple of powerfully-built deputy sheriffs, who walk on either side of him. The county sheriff brings up the rear, and they arrive just in time.

The train swiftly speeds on its way. They change cars at Ann Arbor, and board a Michigan Central train. A short ride on this road, and they arrive at the Union Depot, in the city of Jackson. The officers and their prisoner take a cab and are rapidly driven to the great prison, whose high walls loom up dark and forbidding. At the prison the officers turn their prisoner over to the prison officials and make preparations to return to Mt. Vernon.

Their prisoner has been a model of good behavior, and when they leave they shake hands cordially with the condemned man. They promise to tell his mother that he is quite comfortable and does not find prison life so disagreeable as he expected. This is a fib, of course, but for once in his life he feels that he is breaking the commandments in a good cause.

He is given a bath; his hair, moustache and whiskers are closely shaven off, and a striped pair of trousers, shirt and jacket to match, are given him in exchange for his citizens' clothes, and he is then led away to his cell.

His number is 444. This will be the name he will henceforth bear. Frank Vernon ceased to exist when he passed through the great gates of Michigan's principal prison.

444 is closely watched the first few months of his impris-

onment. The sheriff of Mt. Vernon had informed the warden of the prison of Frank's oath to escape; but as time passed on, 444, who was a model prisoner, was less closely watched, and finally no more attention was paid to him than to the other long-term prisoners.

He was put in the tailoring department at the beginning of his incarceration, but showed so much intelligence and skill when assigned to the duty of occasionally packing the ready-made garments into the boxes that he was finally given charge of that department under the close watch of a guard. The clothing was sold to various clothing dealers to help maintain the expenses of the prison.

His splendid education and knowledge of bookkeeping was of the greatest aid to several of the prison officials, who took advantage of the opportunity to shift some of their troublesome accounts on the shoulders of 444.

In time he became a general favorite, and the more arduous duties of the prison were never performed by him.

He was working with one great object in life, "Escape."

Escape meant life, real life, liberty and the pure light and air of the outer world, a world that was set apart from him.

The old craving for liquor was gone now. It had worn away with time, and he was himself again, cold and calculating. He weighed every chance and resolved to take no chances until he was reasonably sure of success.

Several times wild, impossible schemes of fellow-prisoners were proposed to him by means of taps on the walls. This was the favorite way of conversing among the prisoners. They were not allowed to speak to one another, but at times they managed to whisper a word or so without being detected. But these occasions were rare, as a guard was ever near with a gun over his shoulder, and the gun was carried for use, not for a show.

A year and a half passed away. 444 frequently got letters from home. But none of them had ever as yet visited him, although every letter contained a promise to do so. The

fact was, none of them could muster up courage enough to go and see the poor wretch in his prison stripes.

Prison life was becoming unendurable for a wild, passionate nature like 444, and to be confined in his narrow prison quarters was worse than death to him. A thousand different schemes and plans would suggest themselves to his mind, only to be cast aside as worse than useless, for to try and then fail meant to lose all chances for another attempt, for he would be placed in close confinement and a double watch placed over him.

The prison had been turning out a great deal of ready-made clothing of late, and he was given full charge of packing the boxes.

Old Mike Sullivan, a lifer, more commonly known as 162, was his assistant. Old Mike had taken quite a fancy to 444, and, as Old Mike, or 162, was nailing the last boards on to a box, a wild, daring scheme entered his mind.

Why not substitute himself in place of the clothing?

The scheme was certainly hazardous, and the chances were about even that he would be discovered before the boxes left the prison.

The boxes were nailed up in the packing-room and then trucked out into the yard, labelled and weighed, then loaded on to huge trucks and hauled to the depot.

At the gates the boxes were given a most rigid inspection before they were allowed to pass through.

Here was where the greatest danger would lie, and should he once be discovered in making such a bold attempt to escape all hopes for the future would be gone. The chances were that he would be locked up in solitary confinement.

The boxes weighed about eight hundred pounds when ready for shipping, and an inspector stood by while 444 gave the directions for packing each one.

One of the greatest difficulties would be to conceal himself in the box without the inspector seeing him. Should the inspector leave but an instant there would be some slight hope.

He must have help. Even after this was done some one must nail him in. As he was giving 162 some final instructions as to nailing up a box he leaned over and whispered his scheme to his fellow prisoner, and asked him if he would lend his aid to carry out the project.

"That I will," said 162, his eyes dancing with a fierce joy. "If you can get into the box, you can count on me nailing you up in it. Begorry, you have made my life a whole lot easier the last six months, while I have been helping you, and, besides, I loike you, my lad, I loike you. My life is about at an end anyway. I cannot live much longer, and I wouldn't escape if I could. I have been shut up in this living hell for thirty-seven years, and I swear to you I am an innocent man, serving time for another's crime."

"I believe you," said 444, "and if I escape I promise to aid you if I can."

"Too late, too late!" said 162. "The course of my life is nearly at an end. I have no friends or relatives who I should care to go to, and I might as well stay here what short time more in which I have to live."

"I am afraid that they will make your life harder if you help me to escape," said 444. "What a pity we can't both escape together."

Old Mike shook his head and said, "Impossible, my lad, impossible!"

The guard was getting suspicious at the length of time they took to nail up the box, and now walked over toward them, which, of course, put a stop to their whispered conversation.

June the 16th was the day set to carry out his plan of escape, and as the day drew near, which meant so much to him, he could hardly contain himself.

As the great prison bell rang out for the prisoners to retire on the night previous to the day on which he was to make the attempt he flung himself down on his narrow cot, his head beating and throbbing with suspense and anxiety.

Sleep was out of the question, and he turned and tossed all night. The guard once or twice asked him if he was ill, but received the reply each time that he was only restless. 444 was subject to these attacks of restlessness and the guard thought nothing of it.

He was up at the first call to rise, and filed out with the long row of prisoners to their meager breakfast, and then to work.

Fortune favored 444 to-day. There was an unusual amount of boxes to be shipped. As they were nailing up the last box that was to be shipped that day the inspector discovered that he had left some of his bills in the office and went after them.

For some reason he was gone an unusually long time, and 162 hoarsely whispered, "Now, lad, now is your chance. Get in and leave the rest to old Mike."

"I hate to get you into this," said 444, who had taken a great liking to the old Irishman.

"Tut, tut, lad, in with you. My life is just about spent. Begorry, they can't make my life much harder than it now is, and it will make me happy to think that in a measure I have helped to release one poor devil from this living tomb."

444 took the old man's hand, pressed it to his lips, saying, "God bless you, Mike. Without your help I never could have attempted this escape."

"You are not out of the woods yet, my lad, and you had better make haste to climb into the box. I will do the rest."

444 clambered in and 162 nailed up the box, and was busily engaged in packing clothing into another one when the inspector returned.

162 glibly explained that 444 had been summoned to another part of the prison to look over some bills and accounts that had been tangled up. The guard thought little of this, as 444 was an expert bookkeeper and was often called upon to perform these duties.

The boxes were stamped and labeled for their various desti-

nations, and in a short time they were loaded on the trucks and hauled towards the great gates of the prison. Here was where the supreme test would be.

He was nearly smothered in his narrow prison, but liberty meant so much that rather than betray himself now he would have kept quiet even if he had suffocated.

The boxes were looked over carefully, and some were even opened again. The box he was confined in was turned over in such a manner that he was left standing on his head, but he dare not even so much as move a muscle for fear of making a slight noise.

At last the guards, satisfied that everything was all right, allowed the driver to go on his way, and they were soon at the Michigan Central freight depot.

Here the boxes were unceremoniously dumped on the floor, and, fortunately, the freight handlers immediately weighed them and loaded them into a freight car which was nearly loaded. The boxes completed the load, and the freight handlers closed the door.

By this time the escaping convict was nearly dead and immediately began knocking off some of the boards on the box. This had to be done by kicking them off with his feet. The noise of the rolling trucks completely drowned the noise he made in kicking the boards loose. He dared not take a hammer in the box with him, for fear that it might be missed, and if this happened it would immediately lead to a search of the entire prison.

To kick the boards off was no easy matter and took him fully twenty minutes to accomplish it.

As the last board was kicked loose a switch engine came snorting down the track and coupled on to the string of cars adjoining the freight depot. In a short time he was hauled far down the freight yards, and running to the door of the car he threw it open and observed a long string of freight cars immediately opposite to him, with a huge engine at the end of them. At this moment the engine gave four long

blasts of the whistle, which indicated that the train was about to pull out.

As the train opposite began moving he peered cautiously out again and saw a car a short distance away with its door wide open. As it came opposite him he made a flying leap and landed in the car attached to the train which was pulling out of the station. Peering cautiously out once more he looked back toward the caboose and there saw two prison guards running wildly down the track toward the car which he had just got out of.

"Whew," he muttered, "that was a close call for No. 444, but a miss is as good as a mile in this case."

In a short time the train passed the last side track and immediately began moving with greater speed.

"Safe! safe!" he cried, gleefully dancing about, and running again to the door he looked out upon the green fields and meadows of Southern Michigan, through which he was swiftly passing.

He drew in great draughts of the fresh, pure country air, and after riding several miles the train began climbing a steep grade and the speed slackened so that he was able to jump off. He was rolled over and over several times, but the ground was soft and he was not injured in the least, and arose to his feet and hastily concealed himself in the tall weeds beside the track and lay perfectly still until the train thundered down the steep grade on the opposite side of the hill.

Carefully concealing the marks of his contact with the earth, he made his way swiftly towards some woods a short distance from the track.

"Free! free! absolutely free at last!" he exclaimed, falling on his hands and knees under the shade of a great elm tree.

He tore up great handfuls of the fresh green grass and tossed them about, letting them fall back on him in showers. He sprang to his feet and capered about like a young colt.

"Ah, this is life, this is liberty, indeed. I never knew until this minute what liberty really meant. If there is a

God I thank thee for this moment of supreme happiness. Now for a long tramp. I must get as far away from this railroad as possible, and I must do it in the shortest possible space of time."

Suiting the words to action, he immediately started through the woods, away from the track. He walked and ran by turns, sometimes laughing and talking to himself, at others singing and shouting at the top of his voice.

The unusual exercise soon told on his strength, and at short intervals he was obliged to throw himself down on the green grass at full length and rest himself.

"Whew," he would exclaim to himself, wiping the perspiration from his hot brow, "prison life didn't improve my walking powers in the least. I never was much of a walker any way."

As soon as he had rested himself a short time he would again start on, the fear of capture haunting him. At these times he would break into a run and glance back over his shoulder as if expecting to see the blue uniforms of the prison guards pursuing him. At these times he would fairly fly along over the ground, sometimes catching his feet in the tangled underbrush and falling headlong.

On and on he sped. Mile after mile was covered, until the sun sank from view, and then, and not until then, did he pause long enough to take a rest of any length of time.

With the coming of darkness his fears of pursuit lessened, and he sank down for a good long rest. His eyes closed, his head sank forward on his heaving chest, and in a few minutes he yawned, stretched himself, and then lay down at full length on the ground and sank into a deep, dreamless sleep that lasted until the rays of the rising sun shone full upon his upturned face.

He awoke with a start, and sat up and stared wonderingly about him, then pinched himself to see whether he was awake or dreaming.

"This must be some sort of dream of escape," he muttered;

“directly I shall awake and hear the guard ask, ‘What is the matter, 444, are you restless again to-night?’”

Gradually the full realization of the truth dawned upon him, and he arose to his feet sore and stiff in every limb.

He was scarcely able to stand at first, but the lameness soon wore away and he continued his journey.

“Confound it,” he muttered, “I am as hungry as a sea cook. I could eat some of those prison beans now with relish. Oh, well,” he soliloquized, “I can’t have everything, and no doubt I will find a way to obtain some food during the day, and, by Jove, I must get off this striped suit as soon as possible. It is hardly the proper thing for a citizen at large to wear, and no doubt would cause some amusement among the people,” and he laughed grimly to himself at the joke he had been talking to himself about.

“Lucky thing I struck this big stretch of woods,” he thought, “and if I am not mistaken they extend as far as the west shore of Lake Huron. If I can but make my way to the lake and obtain a boat, good-bye to Jackson prison and the United States. I will cross the lake in some kind of a boat, and once in the Dominion of Canada I can easily escape to the Atlantic coast and ship to some foreign port. At any rate, I will never be taken alive; that I swear, for I will not benumb my senses with that cursed drink again!”

At noon he reached an old cabin in the woods, evidently the home of some trapper and hunter.

Cautiously he peered at the cabin from behind the shelter of a friendly tree. There was no stir, and he gathered up courage enough to approach and look into the windows. The place was deserted. The owner was gone, and on the wall hung two or three modern rifles, and in the corners were the skins of various animals. His heart beat wildly, and he caught his breath in gasps. Once in possession of one of those rifles the fear of starvation was gone, and more important still the fear of capture.

He entered the hut and secured one of the rifles and plenty

of ammunition. The first thing, then, he quickly secured a large piece of venison and a long hunting knife. As he was about to hastily make his exit his eyes caught sight of some rough, but strongly-made, clothing. "Ah, the very thing," he muttered, and quickly exchanged garments.

Going to the door he peered out. "All clear so far," he said to himself. "Now for the grub," and he picked up the venison again, and secured some more trifling eatables, shouldered the rifle, and once more set forth in high spirits; but he forgot one thing in his haste, and this nearly caused his capture. When he changed clothes he left the tell-tale striped garments of the prison behind. The hunter returning home in the evening found them, and noticing the absence of the articles taken by the fleeing man he hastened at once to the nearest town and notified the authorities, who immediately telegraphed to the prison.

A posse was formed and they started out in pursuit.

But let us follow 444 as he plunges into the woods again on leaving the cabin. He walked about five miles and then, hunger getting the best of his fears, he halted and built a fire, and soon the appetizing odor of cooking venison filled the air. He ate ravenously, and then resumed his journey again, refreshed and encouraged.

He tramped all the afternoon, and just at dusk he made another halt and prepared to make another meal of the venison. Just as the fire got fairly started the barking of a dog caused him to spring to his feet and hastily grab the rifle.

"They have discovered the direction I have taken," he muttered grimly. "Very well; so be it. Now it is a fight to the death. What an infernal fool I was to leave those tell-tale striped prison clothes behind me! If I had only burned them up the hunter would have thought that some thieving redskin had robbed him."

The barking of the dog warned him of the methods his pursuers were using to track him. He hastily kicked some

dirt over the burning embers of wood, and then plunged into the woods.

The dog rapidly overtook him, and just as the big brute was about to spring upon him, he threw the rifle to his shoulder and sent a bullet through the animal's heart.

"Number one," he muttered, and again plunged madly onward. He had gone but a short distance when another dog came leaping toward him.

"Here goes for number two!" he muttered, between his set teeth, and, raising his rifle, he took quick aim. A sharp report followed, and the dog fell dead, its great red tongue hanging from its mouth. At this instant a third dog made its appearance and ran quickly up to its dead companion, whining and licking its face. Instinct told the brute what had taken place, and, seeing Frank, he sprang toward him with a deep growl. Again the trusty rifle was raised to his shoulder, and again the deadly contents were poured forth. "Number three!" he muttered. "This is getting rather exciting, but I guess I have finished my four-footed enemies, and now I will start on again. The next ones will not be dogs, and therefore all the more dangerous; but they will be easier to hide from. Fools!" he muttered; "what can they hope to accomplish now? Why didn't they hold the animals in leash?"

The shouts of the men in the distance warned him that he must make haste, and, turning, he ran through the darkness, and soon came upon a railroad track. "This must be the Ann Arbor railroad," he muttered, "although I didn't have any idea that I was so close to it."

Looking down the track in the darkness, he saw the bright headlight of an approaching train. He was on the summit of a high hill, and instantly into his mind came the recollection of how the other train had slowed up.

"My only chance," he said to himself. "That is the night express from Toledo, and it carries a long string of sleepers. It is the heaviest passenger train on the road, and

is bound to slacken speed somewhat in climbing this grade. If it only slackens down to twelve or fifteen miles an hour, I stand a small chance of making a flying leap on the blind baggage. It is a risky thing to do, but I might as well get ground to pieces under the wheels as to get shot or captured, for those men are getting uncomfortably close."

He hid in the underbrush close to the track and soon his pursuers burst into view and climbed up on the track. They looked up and down the track in both directions, and then plunged into the woods on the other side. There were fully a dozen of them, and they were armed to the teeth.

"Great Scott! That was a close call," muttered the convict when they had disappeared in the woods. "They are liable to be back here at any minute. Lucky thing for me that it is so dark and that they let the dogs run loose instead of holding them in leash."

He hid the gun under the leaves and prepared to catch the train, which was now close upon him. His heart beat so that he was nearly suffocated. "If I miss the train, I am lost," he thought.

Nearer and nearer the bright headlight approached. The engine passed him, and he sprang toward the steps of the baggage car. "Now or never," he muttered between his set teeth, and made a plunge for the handles of the steps. He caught hold of it with both hands, but he was swung around with great violence and struck the side of the car, knocking the breath out of him. But he managed to climb laboriously upon the platform, and sank down trembling and exhausted, safe for the time being, every minute putting nearly a mile between himself and his late pursuers, for the train was now thundering down the steep grade at a terrific speed. "Go it! go it!" he muttered. "You can't turn them any too fast for me."

On and on thundered the night express through the darkness and cold. It soon began to rain, and its unknown and

uninvited passenger crouched down in the shadow of the tender, shivering and forlorn.

Two long blasts of the whistle at last announce that the train is approaching a large city and will make a stop.

"This won't do at all," said 444 to himself. "They will take water here, and the fireman will climb on top of the tender, and the chances are ten to one that he will see me. I will climb up on top of the baggage car and lie flat down, and no one will see me in the darkness."

It was no easy task to accomplish this feat. The rocking and swaying of the train nearly caused him to lose his hold a half dozen times as he was climbing up the wet, slippery end of the car. "Whew! They won't need any officer to catch 444 if I fall off from here," he panted, clinging desperately to the end of the swaying car.

At last he was up on top of the baggage car, and none too soon, for the swiftly-flying train had nearly reached the station, and just as he sank down on the roof the fireman came up on the tank with a lantern, ready to pull the water spout down from the water tank as soon as the engine arrived opposite.

Frank raised his head just high enough to catch a glimpse of the flickering electric lights of the city. "Owosso," he muttered, "and this is the through train. Mt. Vernon is sixty miles from here, and this train won't stop again until we pull into the Union Depot at Mt. Vernon.

"Is it fate? To think that this train should come along at just the moment when I was about to be captured or killed by those officers, and then that its destination should be Mt. Vernon, of all places on the face of the earth! I feel a strange sort of foreboding hanging over me. I am not superstitious in the least, but I cannot shake off the feeling of depression that weighs upon me."

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor at this moment, and putting a stop to Frank's thoughts. The bell rang, and

then the great wheels of the locomotive began to slowly revolve, pulling the long string of cars in its wake. Faster and faster it went, and soon they were flying along through the darkness past woods, streams and small villages, but never pausing or slackening speed until the suburbs of Mt. Vernon were reached. Here he raised his head and looked at the lights of the sleeping city.

"A year and a half," he muttered. "A year and a half ago I was chained to a couple of deputy sheriffs, and on my way to that living tomb at Jackson. To-night I am being borne back to the same place which was the scene of my birth, innocent childhood, and then young manhood, and then the zenith of my career as a bank cashier; then the steady downward path that made me a murderer and fugitive from justice.

"What a strange thing life is! I might just as well now be the owner of these mills, whose lights twinkle in the distance, and the father of a happy family. But I am not, and why?

"It is all summed up in five little words—'drink and an unrequited love.'"

He was looking at the city, whose lights were being rapidly approached, and these thoughts were running swiftly through his mind. At this moment a hot cinder struck him fairly in the eye. "Damnation!" he said, furiously, frantically rubbing his smarting optic. "I might have known better than to have exposed my face to those hot cinders."

He was kept busy trying to extract the cinder from his eye all the time the train stood at the depot.

The iron horse had now reached the end of its journey. It was now nearly time for daylight, and as the train pulled up the track and then backed down on a siding, where its sleeping occupants could easily reach the depot when they arose, he quickly slid down on the tender unobserved, and made his way to the river and crossed the old mill dam.

"Ugh!" he muttered. "I can feel the spirit of that dead girl upon me now. I believe that I am soon going to join her."

Quickening his steps, he made his way to the same clump of bushes and trees where he had often met the trusting girl whose life he had ruined. Throwing himself down under the spreading branches of a great maple tree, he fell into a slumber of exhaustion, but his dreams were disturbed by visions of pretty Marguerite Manning. Her hands were outstretched, wildly grasping at his arms to prevent herself from being hurled into the water.

He awoke with a start, the perspiration oozing from his forehead. The sun was high in the heavens, and the familiar sounds of the saws as they ripped through the great logs were borne to his ears. His throat was parched and dry, and he seemed to be burning up.

"I must have a drink of water," he muttered, trying to struggle to his feet; but his limbs refused to support his body, and he fell back helpless, every bone in his body aching, and his head throbbing and beating.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "I am going to be desperately ill, and I feel as if I were going mad, mad! They will capture me and drag me back to that living hell again. I must escape! I will escape!" and he made another desperate effort to raise himself, but fell back senseless and helpless.

His escape from prison, the pursuit, unusual exertion and exposure had been too much for his system, which was necessarily weakened by his long imprisonment. The reaction had now set in, and he lay writhing in the remorseless grip of brain fever, within a stone's throw of the place where he had sent poor, pretty, trusting Marguerite Manning to her death.

CHAPTER XXII.

Retribution

As the hours passed the grip of the terrible fever took a firmer hold upon him. His senses returned for a short time, and he realized fully the terrible position he was placed in, and cried out in terror and anguish. Soon he became delirious and raved and swore in a horrible manner, cursing the judge and the jury for condemning him to prison for life. Now he was in fancy a prisoner and being nailed up in the box, and then passing the great prison gates he was hauled to the railway, and now he was frantically kicking off the boards of the box which held him prisoner, now he was leaping onto the moving freight train, and as the train reaches the steep grade he jumps off and runs into the woods.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he raves, "you will never take me alive now," and he fancies he has secured the hunter's firearms.

Now he is pursued by the men and bloodhounds, and in fiendish delight he imagines that he is pouring the deadly contents of the gun into their great bodies.

Now he sees the train in the distance. It comes nearer and nearer, and he leaps upon the platform of the baggage car and laughs at his pursuers.

"Rush on, chariot of the devil," he raves, "rush on to perdition and bear me to the dead girl."

His senses leave him again, and he does not awake again until evening. It is dark, and he staggers to his feet, muttering, "Why in the devil don't she come. The boys will miss me at the club and suspect. I will look and see if she has left me a note," and staggers over to the place where the same old log lies, thrusts his hand within the small opening, mutters, "Nothing there; she will soon be here, and I will wait for her."

In fancy he sees her come. The same old scene is again gone over, and they are again on the dam. Cursing her, he shouts, "You will never live to tell her I ruined your life!"

Rising to his feet he rushes to the edge of the dam, and standing on the very edge he in fancy flings her down, down to the boiling, hissing waters below. Cautiously he looks around to see if he has been discovered, and then starts as if to go home. Suddenly he stops, for this time in reality he sees the figure of a belated pedestrian approaching. He turns around, but the man who is coming observes his strange actions and quickens his pace. Frank also quickens his footsteps and reaches the dam again, and looking back he shouts to the puzzled citizen, "I know who you are. You are the prison warden, come to take me back again. But you never shall. I defy you all. Curse you, I defy you. Ha! ha! ha!" he raves, dancing on the very ends of the boards projecting out over the water, "take me if you can. I defy you! I defy the whole world!"

"The man is as mad as a march hare," mutters the citizen, who is an employee of the saw mill company. "I must save him or he will throw himself into the water and be drowned before my very eyes."

With this object in view he cautiously edged his way toward the mad man. He was a powerfully-built man of Herculean strength, and the crazy man would be but a child in his grasp, consequently he felt no fear.

Frank, with the cunning of a mad man, watches him out of the corner of his eye. "Come closer, come closer," he said, tauntingly; "Why don't you come and take me?"

The citizen edged closer still, and when he thought himself near enough he made a spring toward the jibbering maniac.

"Ha! ha! ha! You thought you had me that time, warden, didn't you? But I know a trick worth two of that. Marguerite! Marguerite! open your arms. I come to join you!"

With a spring he bounds high in the air, and with a last blood-curdling laugh he shot far out in the foaming waters below and sank from sight.

"Good God!" muttered the would-be rescuer, aghast, "he has drowned himself in spite of all I could do to prevent him. There is no use for me to look for his body, for it will be swept far down the stream before I can procure a boat. All I can do is to go back to the city and spread the alarm."

Suiting the words to action, he quickly retraced his steps and told the first policeman whom he met the news.

The officer aroused a couple of the day officers, and together they searched the river banks far up and down, but were unable to find any trace of the maniac.

"We can do nothing further until daylight," finally said one of the officers.

"You are right," replied both of his companions, "and we might as well turn in until daylight and get some rest."

They all agreed to this, and the two day officers sought their respective homes.

At daybreak the search was resumed, and this time the banks of the river were lined with curious people, who had learned the news of the mad man's terrible leap.

About 11 a.m. the body was found among the debris of a pile of driftwood in the center of the stream, and, strange to relate, only a few hundred feet from the same spot where the body of poor, beautiful Marguerite Manning was found.

The coroner was notified, and he hastened at once to the scene. He held a post-mortem examination of the body of the dead man, and the following verdict was rendered:

"We, the coroner's jury, find that the deceased came to his death while insane, by deliberately throwing himself off from the Mt. Vernon dam."

The man who tried to prevent the maniac from committing suicide told of the man's last words, and into the minds of several rushed the thought, "It must be Frank Vernon!" He was known to have escaped from the prison, but the body was

so badly mutilated from contact with the sharp stones that it was impossible to identify him.

A messenger was dispatched to Mt. Vernon, and Drs. Vernon and Ellis were requested to come and view the body. In a short time the two physicians appeared on the scene, but were unable to identify the horribly mutilated countenance of the dead maniac.

Dr. Vernon was pale, but bending down he quickly tore open the ragged edges of the shirt on the corpse, remembering that there was a scar from a burn Frank had received in childhood. There, sure enough, was the scar, vividly plain in spite of the bruises on the flesh.

Sinking on his knees, he murmured, "God, Thy will be done." Rising, he instructed that a litter be built, and they carried him to a nearby farm house, where a horse and wagon was procured and the body was removed to an undertaking establishment.

"The sad news must be broken to his mother now," said Dr. Ellis to James.

"Yes," said Dr. Vernon, "and I fear the shock will be fatal."

But it was not. The news had already reached every member of the family. Some enterprising newscarrrier had seen to that part of it. There are always some people who take a keen delight in breaking news of this character.

Mrs. Vernon, Violet and Mary were sitting in the drawing room at Greenwold when the two physicians entered, and a glance into the faces of each sufficed to inform them that some one had already been before them with the sad tidings.

Dr. Vernon went up, and kissing the pale, tear-stained face of his trembling mother, said, "The Almighty has seen fit to take his spirit unto Himself and we can but bow to His will."

"Yes," sobbed Mrs. Vernon, "and I feel that my poor, wayward boy is better off in heaven than he was in this sinful world. I feared when he was a child that his violent temper would some day get him into trouble."

“Poor mother,” said Violet, “this is indeed a sad ending to what promised to be such a brilliant career. I have lost a husband and you a son to-day, but, like yourself, I feel that he is better off, and you, too, Dr. Vernon, my more than brother, you have lost an only brother; but I know what a source of trouble and anxiety he has ever been to you, and perhaps it is all for the best that the Almighty has seen fit to take His wayward soul unto Himself.”

“Yes,” said Dr. Vernon. “It may sound cold-blooded, but in my heart I feel that it is best as it is.”

Mary took the matter more calmly than was expected, and little Gracie, when told, cried a little, but, poor little thing, her baby mind could not grasp the full significance of death.

The funeral was held two days after the discovery of the body. The papers were full of the tragic death of the murderer and convict, but gradually died away and was forgotten by all except the relatives and intimate friends of the family.

CHAPTER XXIII.

After Five Years

Five years have passed away since the tragic death of Frank Vernon—five years of peace and quiet to the relatives of the dead man.

Let us look in upon them as they all congregate in the parlor of Dr. Vernon's elegant residence.

He has been highly successful the last few years, and the interior of his home shows it. Many additional changes have been made, and Greenwold is indeed a palatial residence now.

In looks he isn't a day older than he was on that tragic day five years ago, although there is a more thoughtful expression on his countenance, a countenance that inspires confidence and respect in the minds of all who come in contact with him, and hope to the sick and afflicted. He still maintains the same upright carriage and wears the golden beard.

Mrs. Vernon's hair is as white as snow, but there is a quiet, peaceful look in her face that speaks of perfect contentment. If there are lines in her face they are but tokens of the past, a past that is rigidly avoided by all; and if there are moments when memories of past sorrows come into her mind they do not show on her placid brow.

Mary and her husband are lovers still, and her happy looks and ruddy cheeks tell of a life of perfect happiness. They are the parents of three bouncing, healthy children, who romp about on the floor.

Violet sits on the piano stool. She has been playing and singing, but turns around as she hears Dr. Ellis say:

"By Jove, Mary, Violet grows younger and more beautiful every day."

She blushes and says:

"Dr. Ellis, you should not make remarks about me when my back is turned."

"Well, I will say it to your face, then," says the doctor, laughing; "I think you are the most beautiful woman in Mt. Vernon."

"Well, I like that!" said Mary.

"It is the truth. I do think so," affirmed Dr. Ellis; "but you are the sweetest, Mary, dear."

"Thank you," said Mary. "I think Violet is the most beautiful woman in Mt. Vernon myself, and when one woman says that of another there must be some truth in it."

Dr. Vernon says nothing, but the look in his eyes speaks more than he dare tell, and although Violet is not looking at him she feels his eyes upon her and rises in confusion and makes a pretence of helping one of the children to extract itself from between the rounds of a rocking chair.

They all smile except Dr. Vernon, who snatches little twelve-year-old Gracie up and begins talking to her. The child gives promise of having the same great loveliness that the mother possesses.

A sudden thought seems to strike the little maiden, and she says, suddenly, "Uncle Jim, why don't you get married?"

The question is so abrupt, so entirely unexpected, that the usually calm doctor can only gasp,

"What?"

"Why don't you get married, like Uncle Will, and all the rest of the grown-up people? I mean to when I get big enough."

Dr. Ellis roars, Mary laughs and Mrs. Vernon smiles, and Violet pretends to hunt up some music.

"Mamma and you are not real brother and sister, are you?"

Dr. Vernon tries to parry the question, but the pert little maiden is persistent and demands an answer.

"Certainly not," he says at length, seeing the futility of avoiding an answer.

"You love her, don't you?"

"Certainly he does," says Dr. Ellis, promptly.

"Well, she loves Uncle Jim, too, because one day I saw her take his picture and say, 'My lost love, a cruel misunderstanding has parted us forever! How happy I could have been as your wife!'"

No one is laughing now; the situation has become too serious.

Dr. Vernon says sharply, under his breath, "You little rascal, if you don't shut up I'll throw you out of the window," while Violet is furiously turning the pages of a music book that is upside down.

The little miss is conscious that in some way she has committed a terrible sin, but is unable to quite understand what it is.

Dr. Ellis says, "It is time for us to be going," and no one disputes him. Dr. Vernon gets his hat for him immediately, and Violet hurries after the children's and Mary's wraps.

Dr. Vernon accompanies them to the front gate, and, as they turn down the sidewalk there is a sly twinkle in Dr. Ellis' eye as he says, "And a little child shall lead them all. That child has got more sense than you have. Can't you see and understand that the prize is yours? All you have got to do is to 'ask, and it shall be given,'" said he, again quoting scripture.

Dr. Vernon says nothing in return to Dr. Ellis' remarks, but as he ascends the front steps of the veranda there is a thoughtful look on his face, and he says, under his breath, "Why not? I believe I have been a fool and that I am spoiling both our lives. At any rate, I will ask her when I get an opportunity. 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' But I fear in my soul that I will never be able to muster up courage enough. Confound that kid! I'll—I'll get her a nice riding pony for what she said to-night."

When he re-entered the house, Violet and Gracie had made their exit, and he heaved a sigh of relief when he noted their absence. As he looked at his mother, there was a mischievous smile playing about the corners of her mouth, and

she said, in an undertone, "Violet and Gracie have gone to their room."

"Thank heaven," said Dr. Vernon. "That child is enough to drive one to distraction."

"It seems to me that she can see more plainly than you can, my son. You are blind, blind."

Several days passed. Dr. Vernon had a dozen chances to ask Violet to become his wife, but each time his courage failed him. He would say "Violet!" She would look at him, and his courage would melt, and he would turn the conversation off on some idiotic subject, as the crops or the weather, a subject that interested neither. At these times Dr. Vernon would silently curse himself and his cowardice.

One afternoon Mrs. Vernon and little Gracie were out for a drive. Elph was the driver, and Dr. Vernon knew from past experiences that they would be gone a long time. Dr. Ellis was out calling on some patients. Dr. Vernon carefully adjusted his cravat, locked up the office and put a sign on the door, "Called out on important business."

"Now, I'm going to ask her to be my wife. I'll not be a fool any longer.

He rapidly made his way to Greenwold, hurriedly ran up the steps and pretended to try to find something in his office, and fussed around for fully fifteen minutes before gathering up courage enough to go into the sitting-room, where he knew Violet would surely be.

"Hang it all, James Vernon, you are a cowardly idiot to let a mere woman scare you so. Why, your pulse is beating like a trip-hammer," he said, feeling of that member.

"Now, what excuse can I make to go in there?" he soliloquized. "Ah! I have it! I'll go in and make believe I didn't know mother was gone. I'll tell Violet that I came to ask mother to go riding with me."

With this speech on his tongue, he went into the sitting-room, where he knew the object of his thoughts was sitting.

She had seen him come into the house and heard him

ransacking about in his office; she knew perfectly well what he had come for.

"Is mother here?" he said, simulating a look of innocence that was so perfectly ridiculous that Violet burst out laughing in spite of herself, and immediately after could have bit her tongue off, the look of distress on the poor doctor's face was so genuine.

"Violet, you are laughing at me."

"No, I was not," she fibbed. "I was only thinking of a funny occurrence that happened this morning."

"Oh," said Dr. Vernon, much relieved.

"By the way," said Violet, "I believe you were asking about your mother just now."

"Yes; I was going to ask her if she didn't want to go for a drive."

"Have you got the carriage at the door?"

"Yes."

"Oh, how sweet of you! Mother has just stepped out, but I am just dying for a good, long drive. This is a beautiful afternoon. I will hurry up and get my wraps on, and you can take me," she said, pretending to make a motion as if to go after her wraps.

"Don't go, don't go," he said, nervously. "I, that is, we, or us—hang it all, I forgot all about the carriage."

"Well, that won't matter much. I can walk to the office with you. It is only a short distance. I suppose you left it there, didn't you?" she said, interrogatively.

"Er-er, Dr. Ellis is using it, come to think about it."

"Now, that is too bad. I did so want to take a ride," she said, looking as disappointed as possible.

"Confound the carriage!" he muttered under his breath. "Violet," he blurted out, "I didn't come here to see mother. I want to say something to you."

"You didn't come to see your mother?" she said, looking surprised. "Why, I thought you said that you were going to take her for a drive. Now, let me see what can you pos-

sibly wish to say to me that is so urgent? I cannot imagine. Do enlighten me, for I am nearly dying with curiosity," she said, rising and gazing out into the street.

To herself she said, "The foolish man! He will back out yet if I don't manage him right.

"Violet, I have come to tell you that I—that I want you to be—to be careful about going out in the evening without your wraps! You know there is a great deal of sickness in the city now, and you are not very strong."

"The idea!" pouted Violet. "You know that I was sick but once in my life. Do you remember the time? It was when you started away to college. Now, James, you didn't come here to tell me any such nonsense. Come over here and tell me what it is that is troubling you so much of late."

"James Vernon," he muttered, under his breath, "you are a blooming idiot, and some one ought to kick you. The girl wants you to take her in your arms, and you dare not do it. I believe the blood in your veins is growing chilled, and you are becoming a timid old man."

"Well," said Violet, "are you coming over here and tell me?"

The doctor arose, and she resumed her most important occupation of looking out into the street. He approached her, and she didn't seem conscious of his presence. He stood right behind her, as she said, for the third time, "James, are you going to tell me what is on your mind?"

He opened his arms and put them nearly around her, but drew back again, his courage failing him. "If I only dared!" he gasped.

"I will this time," and he put out his arms again, but his courage failed him, and he allowed them to drop back to his sides again. "It's no use," he sighed. "I can't pluck up courage enough."

"Oh, my!" she exclaimed. "Here is a horrid bee; it will catch me!" and stepped quickly back, pretended to trip, and fell backward into the outstretched arms of the doctor.

"Where is the bee? Where is the bee?" he exclaimed, anxiously.

"Oh, you stupid! Can't you see that you are the bee?"

"Violet!" he shouted, "I love you! I love you! I love you!"

"Well, it took you a long time to say so," she said, naively.

"Who's afraid to tell you? I'm not!" and he clasped her tightly in his arms, kissing her lips, her cheeks and her hair. All the pent-up love and passion that had been throttled for years by an iron will was poured out in that minute, and Violet felt that she was more than repaid for all the suffering and misery her one mad act had entailed upon her, the long span of years was crossed at a single bound, and they were boy and girl again in youth's golden paradise under the old grape arbor.

"Can you ever forgive me for the pain I have inflicted upon you?" she said, throwing her arms about him as in days of yore.

He stopped the question with a kiss, and replied, "Let the past be forgotten and buried in its own sad memories. Let us live for the present, for the future and for our mutual happiness."

"Yes, let us forget the past and live only in the light of our great love. We will be the same boy and girl to each other as we were before that terrible night, when we were both made the dupes of those two who are now sitting before the judgment seat of Him who will judge us all."

"I promise not to offend again," she said.

With the reader's kind permission, we will draw a curtain over the rest of that scene and look in again upon them a few months later as they make preparations for their wedding.

It is going to be a grand affair, and the columns of the papers are again filled with the history of the Vernon family. They state that the two were lovers in youth and were en-

gaged to be married; they quarrelled and she married the brother of the prospective bridegroom for spite. But he never forgot his first love, and waited all these long years for his little lost sweetheart. Now they were going to be married at last.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Lou's Long Waiting Over at Last

It is Violet's wedding morn, and the sun never shone on a fairer or more beautiful morning.

The birds twitter in the branches of the old oak tree, whose limbs brush against her window, and their chirping awakens her. The sun shines through the open window, pouring a halo of golden light over her, and she quickly springs out of bed and runs to the window.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" she exclaims, sinking on her knees before the window; "was there ever such a perfect beginning of a day—a day that will unite me to the man whom I so cruelly wronged and misjudged—that terrible night that seems so long ago? God grant that the beginning of our wedded lives may be as perfect as this lovely morning, and continue so to the end."

Rising from her kneeling posture, she quickly dresses herself and descends the spiral stairway leading into the great hall below.

She is the first one up, with the exception of old Aunt Lizzie, who is busily engaged in arranging the dainties for the wedding supper.

She sees her young mistress as the latter peeps through the door at her and exclaims, "Come in, honey, come right in, honey, and see youh old Aunt Lizzie fixing de good fings for youh wedding supper."

"Oh, Aunt Lizzie!" she exclaims, putting both fair white arms about the old colored woman's portly form. "I am so happy this morning—happier than I ever was in my life."

"Yes, honey, youh ought to be happy, 'cause youh done going to marry de best man what ever lived. I done seen his grandfodder, and den his fodder, married, and now I'se

going to see him married. Dere is going to be good luck dis time foh youh and a long and happy life. Now, honey, you come out under the shade of the old oak tree, and den we will sit down, and I will tell youh why; youh old Aunt Lizzie ain't as young as she used to be, and I can't stand on my feet like I done used to. Why, honey, I'se one hundred and one years old. Dat am a long time; dat am long enough for anybody to lib. My eyes am getting bery poor, and I reckon I am getting about useless."

"Don't say that, Aunt Lizzie. You could never be useless. You and Uncle Joe have been the most faithful friends mortals ever had, and it will be a task of love to wait upon you in your old age."

"Dat you would, honey; dat you would, I knows; but since Joseph done died dese last five years ago, I kindah feel dat it am best dat I go, too."

"Now, mammy, you must not talk like that. You will live a long time yet. Why, you are almost as spry as Martha is."

"Yes, I know, honey, but Martha am a very old woman, too; she am over eighty years old."

"Gracious!" said Violet, "that seems like a long time. Why, just think of it, I am nearly thirty, myself."

"Dat am true, honey, but youh am just in the prime of life; you and Marse James have got many long years to live yet."

"Yes, mammy, but you have not told me why I am going to have good luck on this day."

"I am coming to dat, honey. And now, to begin with, Marse James' grandfodder was married on a dark, rainy day, and the result was dat in one year and a half de poor, pretty missis was laid away to rest. At de time Marse James' fodder was born she was bery, bery beautiful, and reminded me of a beautiful white lily ebery time I looked at her. Just before Marse James' fodder was born she called me to her bed-room and said 'Lizzie, I am never going to rise from dis here bed, and if my child lives you must be a modder

to it and always love it just as if it was your own child.' I knew dat my poor, beautiful mistress was speaking de truth, but I tried to let on as if I didn't; but she said, 'Lizy, you can't fool me. We bof know dat I won't live through the trying ordeal, and you must promise me what I have asked.' Den I just falled on my knees and said, 'I will ebber be a modder to it.'

"Well, suah enough, de poor, pretty missis did die, but de child, Marse James' father, libed. The marse nebber seemed to be the same again. He just wandered about the house and grounds like one in a dream. He nebber spoke to any one bery much, and pined and pined away, and when Marse James' fodder was twelve years old he just took to his bed one afternoon, and de next morning, when he didn't get up, I opened de door, and dere he sit in a chair in a dressing-gown as natural as life. He had de pooh missis' picture on his knees, and he was gazing at it like he was in a deep study. I spoke to him, and he didn't answer, but I was used to dat because he done dat lots of times before; den I went up and shook him, and de picture fall on de floor, and his head fall forward on his breast. I held him up, and den I touch his face. It was cold, and den I see dat he was dead, dead, with de poor missis' picture in his hands.

"Now, honey, dat am de first link in de chain of circumstances dat go to show dat you am going to have good luck on dis bright sunshiny day. Now, to resume mah story. Den come Marse James' father's marriage; it am a beautiful day, just like dis, and you see de result. Dey have a long, happy life without trouble until de last end, when Marse Frank done fall by de wayside."

"Yes, yes, mammy, but don't let us talk of him."

"All right, honey, but I must remind you of your marriage wid Marse Frank. It was anodder dark day, and you know bery well how it turned out.

"Now it am a bright day again, and dat goes to prove dat it am a token ob good luck."

"You are superstitious, like all the rest of your race, mammy, but I hope your prophecy will come true."

"'Deed it will, honey! 'deed it will! You may be bery sure ob dat."

"Well, mammy, we have been out here almost an hour, and we had better return to the house, or they will be searching for us. I hear some of them up and moving about now," she said, rising and going toward the house.

The wedding took place at two-thirty o'clock, and they were to start on their wedding trip at five. It was planned that they should go to Southern California.

The wedding dinner was a grand affair, and lasted until nearly train time. A great many guests were invited, some of them coming from Ann Arbor and Saginaw, among them ex-Senator Thurman, who, it will be remembered, was toast-master at Will's and Mary's wedding.

The time slipped away on golden wings, and, almost before they realized it, the time came for them to take their departure.

The last good-byes were said, and they were driven rapidly to the depot by Elph, who still retained his position of coachman.

As they enter the closed carriage and the door is shut, Dr. Vernon takes her in his arms and murmurs, "My love, my wife at last! Love's long waiting is over. Henceforth you are mine, mine alone."

Violet's only answer is to throw her beautiful white arms about his neck and softly say, "Yes, yours at last, and nothing shall ever part us again."

CHAPTER XXV.

A Page from the Past

The train bursts into view around a curve and rapidly approaches. As soon as it comes to a standstill in front of the depot the doctor and his bride are assisted into a Pullman by a polite porter, who takes in the situation at a glance.

"Ah, ha! Just married. A rare chance for a princely tip," he mutters.

The engine which has pulled the train into the station is quickly taken off and another attached in its place. The conductor signals the engineer to go ahead. The great wheels of the locomotive slowly revolve, but what is that coming madly down the street? It is a foam-flecked horse, its rider wildly urging it on to greater speed while he frantically waves his hat at the astonished train crew. The engineer closes the throttle and applies the air brakes. The train comes to a pause and the conductor quickly runs up to the horseman, who has thrown himself from the panting animal.

"Conductor, Dr. Vernon and his wife are on your train, and I have a message from a dying woman for them," he says, breathlessly.

"All right," responded the obliging railway official, "I will take you to them."

"Doctor!" bursts forth the rider as he enters the car and catches sight of the doctor and his wife, "Mrs. Rothford is dying, and she says she has a confession to make concerning Miss Violet. I begs your pardon, I means your wife," said the messenger, who is Mrs. Rothford's servant.

"What can it mean?" said Violet, wonderingly. "We must postpone our trip a short time, darling, and go and see. It must be something important, indeed, that would cause Mrs. Rothford to send for any of us."

"Yes, indeed," replied the doctor; "you know how bitterly she has always hated us since Susanne died?"

"Yes, I know, and that is what perplexes me," said Violet.

"Conductor, would it be too much trouble to put our luggage off?" he asked.

"Certainly not," replied the obliging official.

Doctor Vernon and his bride alighted from the train and again climbed into the vehicle which had conveyed them to the depot.

"Elph, drive like the devil back home. We must get mother and go out to Mrs. Rothford's home. It is fully five miles out of the city, and the woman is dying."

"All right, sah; I done get you out in double quick time. Dis am de best team in de county, and I done knows how to make dem do their berry best, sah."

The Vernon residence is soon reached, and they find Mrs. Vernon all ready and waiting. The messenger had gone to the house in quest of them, and when informed that they were probably boarding the train at that very moment he quickly told why he had come and then dashed madly away in the hope of still being in time to deliver his message.

As soon as Mrs. Vernon is assisted into the carriage the imp speaks a few sharp words to the thoroughbreds and they are off like the wind.

"By golly! Dis am not the first time dat I'se raced dese hosses against dat grim old monster called death and won de race, and I am sure gwine to win dis time! I feels it in ma bones dat dat old lady Rothford am gwine to make some important revelations 'garding Miss Violet, and I done wonder what dey is? She done say some time ago dat she specks dere is some one in Mt. Vernon what knows who Miss Violet's folks am. I done told old Marse Vernon what she said, and den he says, 'Nonsense, imp, it is nothing but idle gossip,'"

Aloud he says: "Get dap, Dolly! Hurry up dere, Daisy! You must do youh berry best dis time, 'cause dis am a serious case, indeed, now."

There is no need to urge the high-spirited animals on, however, for their Arabian blood is aroused and they fly over the smooth road like a whirlwind.

The occupants of the carriage scarcely speak during the entire journey, for it was all they could do to retain their seats in the swaying vehicle.

The Rothford home is at last reached, and they are quickly ushered to the sick woman's room by Mr. Rothford, who looks pale and frightened.

The eyes of the dying woman light up with a glad look of recognition, and she exclaims, in a weak voice, "Oh! I was so afraid that you wouldn't reach here in time, for I know that I have but a short time longer to live!"

Dr. Vernon began to try and soothe her by a few gentle words, but she waved him aside, saying:

"Doctor, it is useless to try to hide the truth from me, for I know full well that I have but a few short hours to live at the most, and before I die I have a long story to relate that will tax my little remaining strength to the utmost. Violet, come closer," she exclaimed, her sad eyes gazing into Violet's blue orbs.

Violet advanced and knelt by the bedside, and the dying woman's hand sought hers in a clasp that seemed to beg forgiveness.

The others gathered closely around her bedside and gazed upon her with fixed attention. Mrs. Rothford began:

"Now listen, for my time grows short. I, Patricia Rothford, was born in Kent, England, in the year 1845. My father, Adolph Cornwell, was an Englishman, as you well know, but he was by birth and education a gentleman and held a title of high degree, being of kin to the Southamptons, one of the oldest families in England. He married Lady Elizabeth Stewart, a great heiress and a woman of many accomplishments and great beauty, but she had also a violent temper. I was their only child, and was petted and spoiled from infancy.

Great hopes were entertained for my future. A great and brilliant marriage for me was the great hope of my proud and haughty parents, and everything seemed to point to its fulfillment up to the time I was eighteen years of age. The Duke of Leland's estate adjoined ours. They held a station in life and fortune which exceeded even that of my father. They had but one child, a son two years my senior. Ah, my God! How I loved that boy, and he seemed to like me until Miriam Westerley, a distant relative of the family, came to live with them. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever beheld, and from the moment young Lord Graves' eyes rested upon her he could think of no one else. I was forgotten and neglected, and where he formerly spent his time with me, he now spent it with her, and she reciprocated his love. I could see it from the first, although she tried her utmost to hide it from the world. The Duke and Duchess were upright, conscientious persons, and when their son told them of his love for their talented young kinswoman, and although they might have hoped for him to have made a wealthier alliance, they consented to the union of young Lord Graves to their beautiful but poor relative. My mother was furious, but, as our social standing might be imperiled by the Duchess, she dared not openly defy or offend her. A consultation was held between their Graces of Leland and my parents, Lord and Lady Cornwall, and the former expressed their regrets that their son could not care for me in the way they had hoped. They departed in all politeness, but there was a gulf between the two families, and from that time they drifted further and further apart."

The sick woman paused to regain her strength, and a few drops of dark liquid, with a glass of water, were given her. It seemed to refresh her, and she addressed Violet, saying:

"Violet, do you follow me? You understand that I was once the promised wife of— But you will know who later."

Glancing at the attentive faces around her, she continued:

"Shortly after the engagement of young Lord Graves and

Miriam Westerley was announced my people left England, and we remained abroad for two years. But my life was ruined. All the love of my passionate nature had been given to Lord Graves, who had thrown it carelessly aside as a thing not worth mentioning. But he little knew the nature of the girl whom he had discarded, for the moment their engagement was announced I swore I would never rest night or day until I accomplished their undoing and made them suffer the humiliation I had been made to undergo.

"When we returned to England, Lord Graves and his wife were the proud and happy parents of a new-born babe. When I heard the news a feeling of devilish exultation seized me. Here was a chance to make them drink from the bitter cup I had been forced to taste. I resolved to steal their child and laid my plans well. I first secured a large sum of money from my father, besides drawing from the bank the larger part of my own private fortune. Everything worked in my favor. A few days after I secured the money I mysteriously left home, disguised myself, took a roundabout course and reached Belleville Castle under the cover of a beautiful summer night. The window of one of the rooms was open, and I crawled through, my heart beating with terror lest I should be discovered, but, thanks to my knowledge of the Castle, I even found the nursery and found the baby alone and asleep. I seized the child and fled from the house to the railway station. Upon reaching the station I barely had time to purchase my ticket before the train for London came thundering in. I got on board with my little burden, and in a few hours we were in the great city of London. The next day I took passage on a steamship bound for New York. I traveled second class, and in this way escaped the watchful eye of the detectives whom I knew would be searching for the stolen child.

"As soon as I reached the wharf in New York I expected every minute I would be seized, but I was not molested. The police in England seemed to be confident that the child was concealed in London and held for a ransom. I left New York

on the first westbound train, and reached Saginaw, Michigan, in due time. I took apartments in a modest house, with a widow lady, after finding a convenient nursery in which to leave the baby where it would be well cared for in consideration of a fair remuneration.

"This lady had a son with whom I became acquainted, and he seemed to take a fancy for me from the first. He was a musician and appeared to be a most estimable young man. I encouraged him, and scarcely two weeks had passed before we were married; that is, I accepted him upon the condition that he ask me nothing of my past life, and that we move to some remote place. He was only too glad to get my consent, and swore he cared nothing for my past life if I would be a loving wife to him in the future. His mother protested at first, but finally yielded, and I gave her enough money to make her comfortable the rest of her life. I and Mr. Rothford directly after the ceremony started for Mt. Vernon. It was then a mere hamlet in the heart of the wilderness, and I fancied I would be secure."

"On the way I reflected what would be the best course to pursue in regard to the child. I hated it for the mother's sake and resolved to abandon it. I would not commit murder, so I confessed to my husband what I had done. He was deeply shocked and frightened, but he loved me madly, and I could easily mould him so that he would do my bidding. I made him take the child and put it on the doorstep of the most pretentious house in the village. I did this that I might more easily keep trace of the child. Violet, you are that child."

All was silence for a moment, and no voice broke the pause. Violet had risen from her kneeling posture and stood gazing at the woman so near death's door; their eyes met. With a deep breath, gathering her strength, she went on:

"To avoid being seen with a child, we stopped in Midland and purchased a team and wagon of our own, and in this way we managed to reach Mt. Vernon without anyone suspecting we had a child."

"With what was left of my money we purchased a home-
stead as near the place where we had left the child as possi-
ble, and my husband went into business. He has been ever
kind and loving to me, and in time I grew to love him in
return.

"A year later we had a little daughter of our own, and
she grew up to womanhood.

"My crime was never discovered, but it acted as a boom-
erang in after years, for my child and the child I had stolen
fell in love with the same man, and that man is—Dr.
Vernon!"

All three listeners had been silent and eager, and each
had felt what was coming, but refrained from making any
remark, for the woman was fast growing weaker, and Dr.
Vernon gave her a stimulant. She closed her eyes for a
moment and gathered the little strength she had left, and
at last resumed:

"You know how it turned out; you know all now. Violet's
parents are Lord and Lady Edmond Graves, now the Duke
and Duchess of Leland, of Belleville Castle, Kent, England.
You will have no difficulty whatever in locating them. In
fact, I have written full directions and you will find them
in my effects. Mr. Rothford will deliver them to you."

Here she fainted from exhaustion, and the husband of the
unhappy woman fell upon his knees by the bedside, weeping
bitterly.

Dr. Vernon busied himself applying restoratives, and
Violet sat white and still, while Mrs. Vernon looked thought-
ful.

Under the skillful efforts of Dr. Vernon, she regained con-
sciousness, but it was the consciousness which precedes death,
and when she opened her eyes the stamp of death was
already in them.

She faintly motioned for Violet to bend closer. She
obeyed. There was a moment's struggle between the grim
monster death and life, but life was victorious for a moment,
and she whispered the one word, "Forgive!"

Her glazed eyes sought those of Violet and caught sight of the tear that dimmed Violet's lovely blue orbs, and, with a gentle pressure of the hand to let her know that she was forgiven, the spirit of Patricia Rothford winged its flight to the great unknown to meet its Maker.

James and Violet stood gazing at each other for a moment; Mrs. Vernon, with tears in her gentle eyes, stood silently looking upon the white, still face of Patricia Rothford; Mr. Rothford, with a low moan of anguish, buried his face in the counterpane.

A moment passed; then each silently turned and softly left the room, leaving the old man alone with his dead.

As the carriage was whirling over the smooth turnpike, James, from the depths of the soft cushions, remarked, "So your true name is really Violet, after all! Lady Violet Graves!"

"O, I do not care for that," cried Violet, showing her true American spirit. "I do not like titles."

"Nevertheless you are burdened with one," replied the doctor.

"It reads just like a fairy book," Mrs. Vernon put in, "and, just think of it, Violet! you are really a great lady, with goodness knows how many titles and aristocratic ancestors."

"All the title I ever wish to hold is 'Mrs. Dr. Vernon,'" she replied, gazing lovingly into the fond eyes of her husband.

"I have indeed won a treasure!" exclaimed the doctor.

"I am so glad that we were married before it was learned to what station of life I really belong, for I know very well that you never would have had courage enough to have asked me to become your wife after the knowledge we all have just gained! Why, just see how long it took you to ask me when you thought I was a mere nobody."

The doctor looked confused and guilty, and exclaimed:

"Violet, I believe you never will cease to remind me of that scene."

The dimples chased themselves over Violet's face as she turned to Mrs. Vernon and said, "Mother, I have a confession to make. I really did the proposing myself! James seemed so big and awkward and in such distress that I actually had to do all the love-making myself."

"Well, I will confess that she is partially right," said Dr. James, "but she didn't have to do it all! Not by a great deal!"

"Doubtless not!" said Mrs. Vernon, dryly. "I suppose you just popped the question, Violet, in an offhand manner, and then he was brave enough after that, I'll warrant! I can well imagine what took place!"

"Youh is home again, Marse Vernon?" said the imp, interrupting them at this point. "I 'spose youse gwine to discontinue youh journey, sah?"

"Yes, Elph; we shall not start for several days now."

The imp felt that he was in duty bound to say something to welcome his young master and his bride, and, removing his cap and displaying a shining row of ivory, he said, "Welcome home once mo', Marse Vernon, and youh, too, Miss Violet. I hopes youh done hab a long and happy life."

"Thank you, Elph," said Violet. "I know your words come from your heart, and I feel the sincerity of their utterance."

"Elph," said Dr. Vernon, "you have ever been my friend, and I doubt if I have ever had a truer or more faithful one. Your words have the ring of truth and prophecy in them."

After the funeral of Mrs. Rothford, it was decided among the members of the family that James and Violet should go to England on their wedding tour instead of to Southern California, as at first proposed.

While in England they would break the news to Violet's parents, rather than to communicate the same by letter from America.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Reunited

After the events recorded in the last chapter, Dr. Vernon and his wife left for England, and, after a pleasant journey, arrived in the great city of London. Here they took apartments, and the doctor wrote to the Duke of Leland, informing him that he had important news to communicate.

Fortunately the Duke was at home, and, on receiving the doctor's note, hastened at once to London, wondering what important news any one from America could possibly have for him.

Dr. Vernon received him alone, Violet not wishing to be present when James related the long story of her life.

The Duke was as fine a specimen of manhood as he had ever beheld, and he felt instinctively that this man was indeed Violet's father. He stood fully six feet in height, and wore a full beard of a dark brown cast, and carried himself with a quiet air of authority and confidence that could only be acquired from a life-long position of responsibility in State affairs, and fully looked to be what he really was—a nobleman and gentleman both by birth and nature.

Dr. Vernon introduced himself and then said, "Your Grace doubtless wonders what I, a stranger from a foreign land, can possibly have to communicate to you."

"I will admit that I have been somewhat puzzled," said the Duke, politely.

"I will not keep you long in suspense, your Grace," replied James.

The Duke said nothing, but looked inquiringly at him, and James began by asking:

"Your Grace was married to a Miss Miriam Westerley at Belleville Castle, in the year 1859, were you not?"

The doctor saw an eager look of expectancy and inquiry

spring into the Duke's eyes at once, and he instantly divined the cause, and resolved to impart his secret as quickly and in as few words as possible.

"Your Grace had one child, a baby girl, that was stolen in infancy?" continued the doctor.

"Oh, God, be merciful!" cried the Duke, greatly excited. "I feel that at last I shall learn the fate of my child!"

Dr. Vernon then showed his Grace the locket, and he took it in his trembling hand and exclaimed, "Great God! The locket I gave Miriam in Geneva, and which was lying on her dressing-table the night the baby was stolen! Why the person or persons took the locket and left so many other trinkets of value lying about is a mystery."

"Your Grace must be calm," said Dr. Vernon, "and I will explain the mystery in as few words as possible."

He then related the story of Violet's life from the time she was stolen from her palatial home up to the time she arrived in London.

The Duke sat as one in a dream, never once interrupting him during the recital.

As Dr. Vernon ceased speaking, the Duke, unable to longer restrain himself, exclaimed, "Take me to her! take me to her! I am burning up with suspense." |

"Very well, I will," replied James, "But you must be calm and careful."

"I promise to be, I promise to be careful; only take me to her at once," he pleaded.

All the stern schooling of a lifetime was gone now. In place of the calm, dignified man of the world who entered the room a short time ago a terribly agitated, loving father stood before him, pleading for a look at the child who had been so cruelly stolen from him in her babyhood.

James stepped quickly out of the room, and, going to Violet's apartments, he gently opened the door, merely saying, "Come, dearest," and led her to the room where her father was anxiously awaiting her. He opened the door, and

she passed through; as he closed it behind her he heard those two sacred names, "Father!" "Daughter!" and hurried quickly away to his own room.

A half hour later, Violet came into the room smiling and happy, and led him back to the room where the Duke was sitting.

"My son!" cried the Duke, shaking his hand heartily. "Violet has told me all about you, and I feel that I have found a son as well as a daughter."

James' face lighted up with pleasure at the Duke's words, and he said, "I shall always try to keep your good opinion of me and to merit your praise."

"I know you will, my boy. I know you will," replied his Grace. "To-morrow morning," he continued, "we shall take the express for Belleville and break the glad news to the Duchess."

The remainder of the day was spent in relating past incidents in the lives of each, and almost before they realized it the hour grew late and they were obliged to retire; but little time was spent in slumber by at least two of the little party.

Violet's slumbers were broken by the thoughts and expectations of seeing her mother, of whom she had not the slightest recollection.

The Duke was kept awake trying to accustom himself to the strange position of being father to this beautiful woman, who was so much like his own wife had been at the same age.

Early next morning found the trio ready and waiting for the morning express, which was to carry them to Belleville.

As they sped through beautiful country places, past castles and homes of Dukes, Lords and Earls, a thrill of pride shot through Violet's breast to think that she, Mt. Vernon's fatherless and motherless little waif, was heiress to one of the grandest, oldest and most beautiful homes in England. A feeling of disloyalty toward America entered her heart for the first time, but looking up she encountered the eyes of

her husband bent upon her with a wistful gaze, and she felt that he was reading her inmost heart. Her eyes dropped guiltily for a moment, but quickly glancing up again she felt that she would not exchange her noble, manly husband for all the aristocracy and old mansions England could boast of.

Belleville was reached after a short journey, and they alighted at the little depot. The Duke had telegraphed their coming and a carriage was in waiting to convey them to the castle. Climbing into the carriage, they soon found themselves being rapidly driven up the broad lane leading to the Duke's magnificent home.

"Welcome home, my children!" cried his Grace, gaily, as he alighted from the carriage. Gone was his pride and dignity; he remembered only that this beautiful creature was his child, the child stolen so many weary years ago, and whom he had given up all hopes of ever seeing again.

As they ascended the broad marble entrance stairs of the castle, the Duchess came out to meet them, and most cordially welcomed them. As her eyes fell upon Violet she turned deathly pale and seemed about to faint; the Duke sprang forward to assist her, but she recovered herself with an effort and said, lightly, "It is nothing," but her eyes constantly sought those of Violet, who could scarcely control her feelings.

His Grace made haste to order a room prepared for them, saying that they would doubtless want to change their traveling garments for others more comfortable.

After they had gone to their apartments, the Duchess turned to her husband and said, "Edmond, something seems to tell me that in Mrs. Vernon we have found our long-lost child. I know she is an American, and a stranger, but she is the exact counterpart of myself when I was her age. A mother's instinct is stronger than time, and, in spite of all the years that have passed, I know, I feel that she is our daughter!"

The Duke led his wife to a double window overlooking a beautiful park, and, seating her in an easy chair, he took her by her hand, saying, "Miriam, dear, it is indeed she, our long-lost little child, now grown to beautiful womanhood."

"I knew it! I felt it the very moment I gazed into her eyes!" said the Duchess, much more calmly than he had dared to expect. "And," continued her Grace, "I feel that in Dr. Vernon she has a husband who fairly worships her and who is capable in every respect of making her happy. A mother's eyes are keen, and there were moments when I fancied that her thoughts traveled back to scenes that were less pleasant than the present."

"Dr. Vernon is the most magnificent specimen of manhood I ever beheld, and I have a father's love for the boy already. You were right in surmising that Violet's past life has not always been as bright and happy as it is now. Be patient and I will tell you the story of her life as it was related to me by both herself and husband."

As soon as the tale was finished, the Duke stole softly from the room and made his way to the apartments occupied by James and Violet. He knocked softly on the door and it was promptly opened by the doctor, and the Duke said, "Come, my boy, you told me last night that you were very fond of horses. I pride myself as being owner of the finest string of horses in all England. And, by the way," he continued, "while we are looking over the stables Violet might go and see the Duchess, who is anxiously awaiting her."

We will draw a veil over that meeting of mother and daughter and follow the newly-found father and son-in-law as they leave the castle by a rear passage and wend their way to the stables.

On arriving at the stables, James found that the Duke made no idle boast when he said that he had the finest string of horses in England. James mentally figured that the cost of keeping such an outlay must mean a small fortune annually.

The Duke read his thoughts, and a smile spread over his fine features as he said, "My boy, you doubtless consider me rather extravagant in keeping such stables. I confess they cost a pretty penny each year, but the rent roll of Belleville is the largest in England, and I can well afford to gratify my passion for horseflesh."

"Your Grace," began James, but the former stopped him by saying, softly, "Call me father. I like it much better. It sounds so sweet in my ears. I feel that I have been doubly rewarded for our long separation by finding both a son and daughter!"

"Thank you, father. I would much rather address you by that dear name, and, as I was saying, you have the finest lot of horses I ever beheld. My one hobby is horses."

The Duke's eyes sparkled with enthusiasm, and he seemed to grow young again as he passed through the stables and pointed out each horse and told of its particular merits. He found in James a sympathetic and intelligent listener and one whose knowledge of horses nearly equalled his own.

"My boy, we shall have some great times together. I mean to keep you here a good share of the time, and when you go back to America I shall accompany you, for I am so anxious to see my little granddaughter and to thank Mrs. Vernon for the great kindness she has bestowed upon my child. I mean to try and persuade Violet to let us keep our little granddaughter with us here at Belleville Castle. The best tutors of the world shall be procured for her education, and she shall be brought up as befits a lady."

After passing through the stables, they made their way through various parts of the beautiful grounds, magnificent deer gazed fearlessly at them as they traversed the winding pathways among the trees; beautiful birds of many-colored plumage sang in the tree-tops. Once they came upon a smiling lake lying in a dell. A light breeze disturbed its smooth surface into little ripples; fishes of different varieties disported themselves in the sunshine; leaping far out of the

water, they would fall back again with a loud splash. The scene was a joyous, beautiful, serene one—a typical scene of beautiful rural England.

Before they realized it, it was high noon, and the Duke steered in the direction of the Castle, remarking, “We’ll now go and have luncheon, James, and then I will relate to you the history of Belleville Castle.”

As they were nearing the castle the Duke remarked, “I believe you told me last night that Violet is a good horsewoman.”

“Yes, indeed,” replied James. “I have seen few better.”

“Ah!” cried his Grace, “she is a daughter after my own heart. The Duchess is still considered the finest horsewoman in England, in spite of her fifty-odd years. To-morrow we shall make an excursion into the forest and carry luncheon with us, and then you may begin to understand the extent and magnificence of Belleville.”

“I am already overwhelmed,” said James. “I have read about just such places as this, but have not had the slightest idea that I would visit one personally. The magnificence and grandeur of Belleville impress one even before they enter its gates. We have nothing in America that can compare with it.”

“No; I believe there is nothing over there that can compare with our grand, old-fashioned homes and grounds. I have been over there on two different occasions, and visited nearly all of the principal resorts and country places, but I failed to see anything that approached our English homes. As far as modern business blocks and mercantile houses are concerned, you can give us cards and spades, and then beat us hands down; but when it comes to palatial homes in the country we have you discounted.”

As the Duke finished speaking they reached the castle, and, entering, they found mother and daughter sitting side by side holding hands and conversing in low tones.

“No secrets, now,” cried the Duke, merrily. “Violet,

you must not tell your mother anything that you wouldn't tell me."

"I believe he is growing jealous already," said the Duchess, with a smile.

"I fear that it will be James who gets jealous," remarked his Grace. "We shall monopolize Violet's time so much that he won't get a chance to have her to himself at all."

"You need have no fear on that score," replied James. "It makes me happy to see others so eager for her companionship and enables me to more clearly see what a treasure I have won."

"Well spoken, my boy, well spoken!" said his Grace. "You have indeed won a treasure of which you may well be proud."

"You will make me vain by all your pretty compliments," said Violet, her cheeks very red under the shower of compliments lavished upon her.

"A truce to compliments," cried her Grace. "Come, let us go in to luncheon, and after the repast the Duke will relate the history of Belleville Castle-on-the-Hill."

It was a lovely day, and after luncheon the quartette adjourned to the lawn in front of the castle, and the Duke began his tale, which ran as follows:

"Of all the famous castles within the British Isles, there is none which can compare with Belleville, both in point of grandeur and commanding position. Built upon a sharply rising hill, in shape, as you see, resembling a gigantic mound, it was for centuries one of the strongest fortresses in the land.

"Robert De Toden, standard-bearer to William the Conqueror, selected it as the most appropriate spot for the erection of a fortress to keep the disaffected Saxons in check. Since those days the castle has been thrice practically rebuilt, and can claim the unique distinction of being the only pile in England which has been by unbroken inheritance the seat of a nobleman since the time of the Conquest.

"The Graves family, of which the Duke of Cantliver was the head, acquired Belleville through the marriage of Sir Robert Graves in 1487 with the sister of the tenth Lord Brose, of Eastlake, to whom the castle had descended from the Conqueror's standard-bearer. Sir Robert's son married an Ulverston, sister of Edward IV, and it was their son who first became Earl of Belleville.

"Princess Anne, who took refuge with the then Earl of Belleville when she fled from Whitehall, repaid his hospitality by making him the Duke of Leland when she came to the throne.

"Enlarged and improved by successive occupants, Belleville, while still retaining the external aspect of a fortress, as you observe, has been transformed into a veritable palace within. That entrance hall, or guard-room, you see just in front of us was designed from Lincoln Cathedral, and is, as you have doubtless observed, a vast apartment, with tall columns and stone arches. To more thoroughly explain, we will enter the castle, and I'll show you the various rooms. I think you will be interested, and it will give me an opportunity to make you more clearly understand."

They arose, and as they passed through the giant double portals the Duke continued, "Queen Anne, James I, George IV, Queen Adelaide, Queen Victoria and her Prince Consort have passed these same portals. The walls of this room, as you see, are covered with arms, ancient and modern, and with historic uniforms and shields belonging to great scions of the family."

Leading them to a table on one side of the room, his Grace remarked:

"Here is a table presented to the castle by Mary, Queen of Scots, and that large bowl you see yonder resting upon the stone which is carved to represent a table, is the punchbowl of the family. It is solid silver, and holds over fifty gallons, and you, my children," he continued, laughingly, to Violet and James, "could easily sit inside of it and then have room to spare.

"Immediately over this guard-room are the royal apartments of three rooms, and we will now sojourn to them."

As they entered the apartments, the Duke led them to the King's bed, which was elaborately carved in mahogany.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Violet, with a laugh. "I fear I would get lost should I attempt to sleep on such a combination of furniture!"

The Duke laughingly led them to where they could look out over the bastion at the famous Regent Gallery, which, he informed them, is one hundred and thirty-five feet long. As they entered the famous gallery, they saw the walls covered with tapestries depicting the adventures of Don Quixote and with the immortal works of the old masters, while busts and statuettes filled the recesses.

After viewing the statues and various works of art, they descended the steps leading from the gallery to the chapel, where the altar piece is Murillo's "Holy Family," one of the priceless pictures of the world. Passing down a long corridor, they entered the library, which, announced the Duke, contained more than seven thousand volumes and many manuscripts belonging to past centuries.

Passing from the library, they entered the picture gallery. Some time was consumed in viewing the portraits of the Lords and Ladies of Belleville, and the Duke had some interesting incident to relate about each one of them. As they came to the north end of the gallery they saw a full-length painting of Henry VIII, and the Duke said that it was painted by Holbein, and known as the best portrait in existence of that monarch.

They then repaired to the Elizabethan salon, a noble apartment fifty-two feet long. Its walls are paneled in satin damask, and its furniture once belonged to Mme. de Maintenon. Huge lifelike statues by Wyatt are everywhere.

The Duchess called their attention to one statue in particular, a beautiful piece in white marble standing quite alone, and said, "Here is my favorite; it represents the fifth

Duchess of Portland ascending to the clouds, and is the feature in the mausoleum."

They next visited the Ambassadors' bed-room, and as they entered, the Duke remarked, "Here is where famous English and foreign ambassadors have slept, and where, God granting, I hope many more will repose."

"Whenever the American Ambassador is invited to the castle he occupies this room—that is, if he accepts the invitation, and he usually does," said the Duke with a drollery that was very amusing.

By this time the ladies were rather fatigued, and they returned to the lawn, the Duke remarking that they would resume their tour of the castle at some future time.

After they were comfortably seated, the Duke resumed his discourse by saying: "You will recall the fact that I mentioned about Victoria having visited the castle. In fact, she has visited it several times. The last time she did not occupy the royal suite. She had occupied it with her consort, and it brought back memories. She chose to live in the Weldon Tower, the oldest part of the castle. The lands and manor of Weldon have been theirs for centuries by tenure of the castle guard. They are required to furnish the guards at the castle when called upon by the over-lord. When Victoria visited Belleville the key of the tower was presented to her by a Weldon.

"There are many other ancient usages at Belleville, the most notable being the pacing of the battlements night and day by sentinels, who call the hours and the weather.

"This," said the Duke, in conclusion, "is a brief outline of historical Belleville Castle and its rulers."

The Duke had a fine musical voice, which held his listeners spellbound, and as he finished speaking, Violet rose, and, crossing to where the Duke was seated, she laid her hand upon his shoulder, saying earnestly, "Father, it is a most interesting and splendid recital to which we have just listened, and I am proud and glad to find that I am of kin

to such a noble, grand old English race," and kneeling, she kissed his hand.

He caught her in his arms and kissed her, and a moment's pause followed, during which no one spoke a word. At last Violet turned toward her husband, a gleam of merriment in her blue eyes as she exclaimed, "I suppose I shall now be burdened with a half dozen titles!"

"Yes," said the Duchess, "you will be known in future as Lady Graves."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the doctor. "That will do all right over here, but wait until she gets back to Mt. Vernon!"

"If you ever dare call me 'My Lady' when we go back, I shall immediately address you as 'My Lord,'" said Violet.

"Don't you dare do that!" exclaimed the doctor, dismayed at once.

The Duke and the Duchess were enjoying the little tilt between the pair immensely, and the Duchess said merrily, "James, my son, she has cleverly trapped you, and you will have to capitulate."

"I surrender," cried James, "upon condition that she never addresses me as 'My Lord.'"

"Very well, sir, I accept your terms, and I shall expect you to strictly abide by them."

"No danger of him breaking the articles of agreement," broke in the Duke, with a chuckle. "He is only too glad to fly a flag of truce."

Thus the day sped merrily on, and as they were about to part and seek repose for the night the Duchess warned them, "Remember, we leave early in the morning on our little excursion."

Early next morning found the little party mounted and on their way. Past meadows, woods and gullies they sped. Several times they stopped at the homes of the Duke's tenants, and, after a short rest, they would gallop on again. The shades of night had fallen ere they reached the castle on their return trip, and Violet declared as they parted for

the night, "This has been the most enjoyable day of my life."

"And I can say the same," said the doctor, enthusiastically.

The Duke looked pleased and said, "I believe I could make thoroughbred English people of you if you remain here a short time."

They went everywhere: to balls, parties, dinners and receptions, and at all functions Violet was the center of an admiring throng. Her wit, beauty and wealth, combined with the strange romance of her life, made her the envy of the women and the admiration of the men.

There was more than one young Englishman who silently wished the big, handsome young doctor was at the bottom of the Atlantic or some other equally far-away place. But James never grew jealous, although he observed all this. He knew that her heart was true gold and belonged solely to him.

Thus six months slipped quickly away—six long months that flew by on golden wings, and were as happy as they were long, making the inmates of the castle as joyous and happy as the famed Cinderella after she secured her fairy prince.

Violet had everything that could make a woman happy: wealth, friends, title, a newly-found father and mother and a husband who was devotion itself. Every week she penned a long letter to the ones in far-away America, and told them of the happy times she was enjoying, and announced the intention of her parents to accompany them when she and her husband came back to Mt. Vernon.

At last came the day that was to take them back to America. They were accompanied to the ship by a legion of friends, who wished them a happy journey and begged them to soon return. They were fortunate enough to have fine weather all the way across the Atlantic, and, after a most enjoyable journey, they arrived in Mt. Vernon once more.

Elph was at the depot to meet them with the doctor's

thoroughbreds, and his ebony countenance fairly shone with delight at meeting his master again.

"Welcome home, sah! Welcome home, sah!" he cried; "and youh, too, Miss Violet, and you, Duke and Duchess, fodder and modder."

The Duke laughed good-naturedly at his strange accent, and the Duchess smiled pleasantly, saying, "Elph, you seem to think a great deal of your master?"

"'Deed I does, Miss; 'deed I does, and so did my ole mammy. She done died dese three days ago—was taken awful sudden like, and died right quick like!"

The tears sprang to Violet's and James' eyes at this sad news. How she would have enjoyed seeing Violet's parents!

"I am so sorry!" cried the Duke. "The Duchess and I wanted so much to see this strange old colored lady."

"I loved her almost as much as my own mother," said James, sadly. "It does seem too bad that she should be taken away just at this time!"

"You said that she was very, very old, did you not?" asked the Duchess, more out of sympathy than anything else.

"Yes," replied James. "She was my father's nurse, and had she lived until February, she would have been one hundred and three years old. Uncle Joe was ninety-one when he died. She outlived her daughter and son-in-law. All there is left of the colored family who have been our servants so many years is Elph, and I fear he will be the last, for he evidently believes in race suicide."

"What am dat?" asked the imp.

"Race suicide is caused by a man refusing to take unto himself a wife," replied the Duke, with a chuckle.

"Edmond, do be careful what you say!" cried the Duchess, severely.

They all laughed, and James remarked, "Well, we must be going. We've stood here fully twenty minutes gossiping, and mother, I know, is walking the floor in her anxiety to see us."

"'Deed she is," said Elph; "and Miss Grace am, too."

They stepped into the carriage, and, as they were whirled away, Violet mused upon her past life. How different was this journey from England from the one she had taken in childhood!

She was then a helpless babe, torn from father and mother by a cruel, revengeful woman, and carried away to a foreign land and cast among strangers. Now she was returning to that foreign land which had been the home of her childhood, her maidenhood and her womanhood, and she had everything that heart could desire; that could make a mortal happy. As she thus mused they arrived at Greenwold, and Mrs. Vernon came quickly out to greet them.

The doctor caught her fondly in his arms and kissed her once, twice, thrice before releasing her. "How happy I am to see you again, dear mother!" he exclaimed.

"It seems like an eternity since I saw you last," she said, gazing up at her tall, handsome young son. "And you, too, Violet," she said, clasping the doubly happy girl in her arms.

As she released Violet the Duchess stepped forward and said, "I do not need to have an introduction. Both my dear children have told me so much about you I feel that I have always known you. How can I ever thank you enough for all the many kindnesses you have shown my darling child!"

"You can best thank me by saying nothing at all," said Mrs. Vernon. "She has always been as dear to me as my own children."

"I feel that words are too small and insignificant to employ at a time like this," said his Grace, stepping forward and reverently raising Mrs. Vernon's hand to his lips. "My heart is too full for the mere utterance of words, and I can only do as you see, my dear Mrs. Vernon, express my deep sense of gratitude by remaining silent."

Mrs. Vernon was deeply moved, and hastily motioned for them to follow her into the house. As they passed the threshold Mrs. Vernon took James' and Violet's hands in

each of her own and said, "Welcome home, my children! Welcome to Greenwold again. We have regained the home of the Vernons and let us pray that the dear old homestead will never more pass out of the hands of the Vernons!"

"Where is our little grandchild, Grace?" were the first words uttered by the Duke after the attendants had taken charge of their wraps.

"Your telegram was in some way delayed," replied Mrs. Vernon, "and we did not learn of your coming until a few minutes before the arrival of the train, and I sent her over to inform Dr. Ellis and my daughter that you would be here directly. I expect them here in a few moments."

As Mrs. Vernon ceased speaking, the sound of footsteps was heard, and little Grace came dancing into the room. She was instantly caught up in the strong arms of Dr. Vernon. A moment later Dr. Ellis and his wife and children entered.

After introductions and greetings were over, Dr. Ellis said, gazing at first the Duchess and then Violet, "The likeness between your Grace and Violet is remarkable. You must have been the exact counterpart of Violet when you were her age."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Ellis. "The likeness is remarkable."

Wilford and Mary remained for lunch, and during the course of conversation the Duchess remarked, "My gracious! what a pair of athletes you two doctors must have made at college. I have witnessed many contests between our English collegians, but I never observed two such men as you are."

"Were they both playing in the same team, I fancy that it would have been safe to wager on their side," chimed in the Duke.

"We were never engaged in a college game of any kind that we were not pitted against each other," said big, good-natured Dr. Ellis, laughingly, and he added dryly, "I generally came out second best."

"Pshaw!" said Dr. Vernon, "it was only because you did not have as strong a team behind you as I had."

"I don't understand betting," said the Duchess; "but if I were to choose between you on points of physical strength, I would as soon take chances on one as the other. My husband was once a great athlete at Oxford."

"Yes," assented the Duke, "I was recognized as Oxford's greatest athlete, but I never was the man you two boys are."

"Boys, indeed!" said Mrs. Vernon, with a smile. "They look more like two great bears than boys."

"Now, mother, you must not be continually making disparaging remarks about our anatomy. It is calamity enough to be obliged to carry around over two hundred pounds of flesh, without being laughed at."

"Much you care what I say about your size," Mrs. Vernon retorted to Dr. Ellis. "Why, the other day he came over to consult me regarding the condition of his health. 'Mother,' said he, 'I have actually fallen away a pound and a half in the last two months. I was weighed the other day, and I only tipped the scales at two hundred and forty-six pounds, and sixty days ago I weighed two hundred and forty-seven and a half.'"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Duke. "Mrs. Vernon, you ought to have been a comedian. Only two hundred and forty-six! That's the best joke I ever heard."

Dr. Ellis looked sheepish, and Mrs. Vernon said, mercilessly, "See how guilty he looks."

"I plead guilty," he said. "Mother, if you won't tell that tale on me again, I'll buy you the finest pair of driving ponies in Michigan."

"Well," replied Mrs. Vernon, "I will think it over. I am not sure but that the joke is worth more than the ponies."

"You may give them to me, if grandma don't want them, Uncle Will," said little Miss Grace, gravely, and the Duke laughed and chuckled again.

Their Graces of Leland remained in Mt. Vernon several months, and when they finally left for England, they took little Grace with them, her fond old grandfather declaring she would be "the first lady in the land."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Conclusion

We will drop a curtain upon the lives of our old friends for the period of seven years, and then look again upon them for the last time.

We find them at the depot of Mt. Vernon awaiting the train which will carry Dr. Vernon, his wife, mother and two beautiful children to New York, there to embark for England.

Dr. Ellis, his family and Elph are there to see them off, and, as the train pulls into the station and they go aboard, Dr. Ellis says, "It is your turn now; we were over there last."

Twice in the seven years that have elapsed have the Duke and Duchess visited their American friends and relatives and as many times have their American friends paid visits to Belleville.

We will follow them across the Atlantic and to Belleville Castle. As they alight from the carriage in front of the great entrance of the famous castle, the Duke and Duchess and a beautiful young lady come out to greet them. There is but little change in either the Duke or the Duchess, except the addition of a few white hairs around the temples of the Duchess and a slight tendency to stooping in the Duke's carriage. But who is this ravishingly beautiful woman whom Violet fondly embraces and receives a return pressure of warm affection?

Can this be the mischievous little minx who said a few years ago, "Uncle Dim, why don't you marry mamma? I know she loves you, because I heard her say one day, 'My love, a cruel misunderstanding has parted us forever. How happy I could have been as your wife!'" It is indeed she,

but few persons would recognize in this lovely, high-bred girl the mischievous little tot who caused the doctor and Violet so much embarrassment on that afternoon so long ago.

She is the belle of every London drawing-room and the most sought-after woman in England. She has suitors by the score, but cares for none of them in the way they so ardently wish. She laughs at them all, and when the Duchess sometimes chides her for her apparent heartlessness, she says almost bitterly, "Grandma, would they be so willing to fall at my feet were I but plain little Miss Vernon, daughter of a drunkard—the village drunkard?"

It is not a pleasant topic to discuss, and Lady Grace seldom mentions it, but when she does the Duchess sighs and remains silent, for well does she know that it is the bitter truth, and will forever mar the life and happiness of her darling grandchild, and the Duchess silently prays that some one will seek her darling, not for her title and fortune, but for her own sweet self, for any man might well be proud of this beautiful woman, who seems to have a heart of marble.

The day following their arrival, the doctor's two children are playing on the lawn where his Grace sat seven years ago and related to his interested audience the history of Belleville Castle.

The younger is a little girl of three years, shaking her dark curls around her sweet face, and her large black eyes are bright and glowing as she romps to her heart's content on the smooth lawn.

The boy is two years her senior, fair and curly-headed, the very picture of his father. His sturdy shoulders and plump little limbs tell of a magnificent coming manhood. He is the nearest living male relative of the Duke of Leland, and will some day inherit all the beautiful grounds, titles and rent-roll of Belleville; but nothing of this kind disturbs his baby mind as he romps with his little sister over the prostrate form of their grandfather who has thrown himself upon the

grass and allows the children to use him as their horse. He seems to be more like a boy himself than the great Duke of Leland, whose voice has thundered forth in the House of Lords so many times.

"Happy childhood!" exclaims the doctor, coming forth. He gazed fondly at the children as he said, "May their lives always be as happy and free from care as they now are."

"Amen," murmured the Duke of Leland.

"I declare," says the Duchess, who sits near by; "he is more like a ten-year-old boy than anybody else when he has children to play with. Our long separation from our darling daughter Violet has made him ever fond of children. I have seen him pick up ragged and dirty little urchins off of the streets of London and carry them around with him in his carriage for hours."

As the Duchess ceased speaking Violet bent and kissed her on the brow, saying, "Mother, dear, is it not strange that I, who once had no parents at all to claim me, should be so rich in parents now? Few children can boast of two complete sets of parents. I do not know which of you loves me best or which I love best."

"We both love you passing well," says Mrs. Vernon, with a slow smile.

Violet walked round behind the chair of the Duchess and, slipping one white arm around her neck and the other around the neck of Mrs. Vernon, she bent over them, saying softly, "Dearest and best of mothers you are."

Dr. Vernon gazes silently at the trio for a moment, and then says softly, "What a pretty, pretty picture you make! I must have you three photographed in that attitude."

The smiling month of May is here, and Mt. Vernon is looking her prettiest in her spring mantle of green. It is the morning of Memorial Day, and one of the loveliest spring mornings imaginable.

As the train steams up and stops with a final pant at the

station platform, Dr. Vernon and his party alight and are met by Elph, who greets them upon their return from England and has the carriage ready to convey them home.

Dr. Ellis and his family have taken possession of Greenwold to greet them, and everything is in order and everybody waiting to welcome them.

A savory dinner is in the course of preparation, and thoughtful Mrs. Ellis has provided well for their comfort upon their return.

After dinner was partaken of, the travelers not being too tired, it was proposed to attend the memorial services. It was a beautiful afternoon, and they all walked over to the cemetery.

When the exercises were over, Dr. Vernon and his wife somehow got astray from the rest. They lingered long in the city of the dead, and at last were the only persons remaining.

Unconsciously they wend their way toward the grave of Frank. As they reach the little green mound which marks the last resting-place of the misguided man, Violet lays a wreath of delicate flowers which she has been carrying in her hand upon the marble slab.

"Poor soul!" says James, sadly. "What a fate was his! His whole life was a mistake and a failure. Through his hand while living we were parted and through his death we were reunited."

"Hush," said Violet. "Speak not so loudly. Let him sleep in peace. The past is buried with its dead, but the future still lives. Let us remember only the present and look forward to the future, and by mutual agreement forget the bitter past, with all its sad recollections."

"You are right, little wife. And now we must be going; we have lingered long, and the sun is already sinking from view."

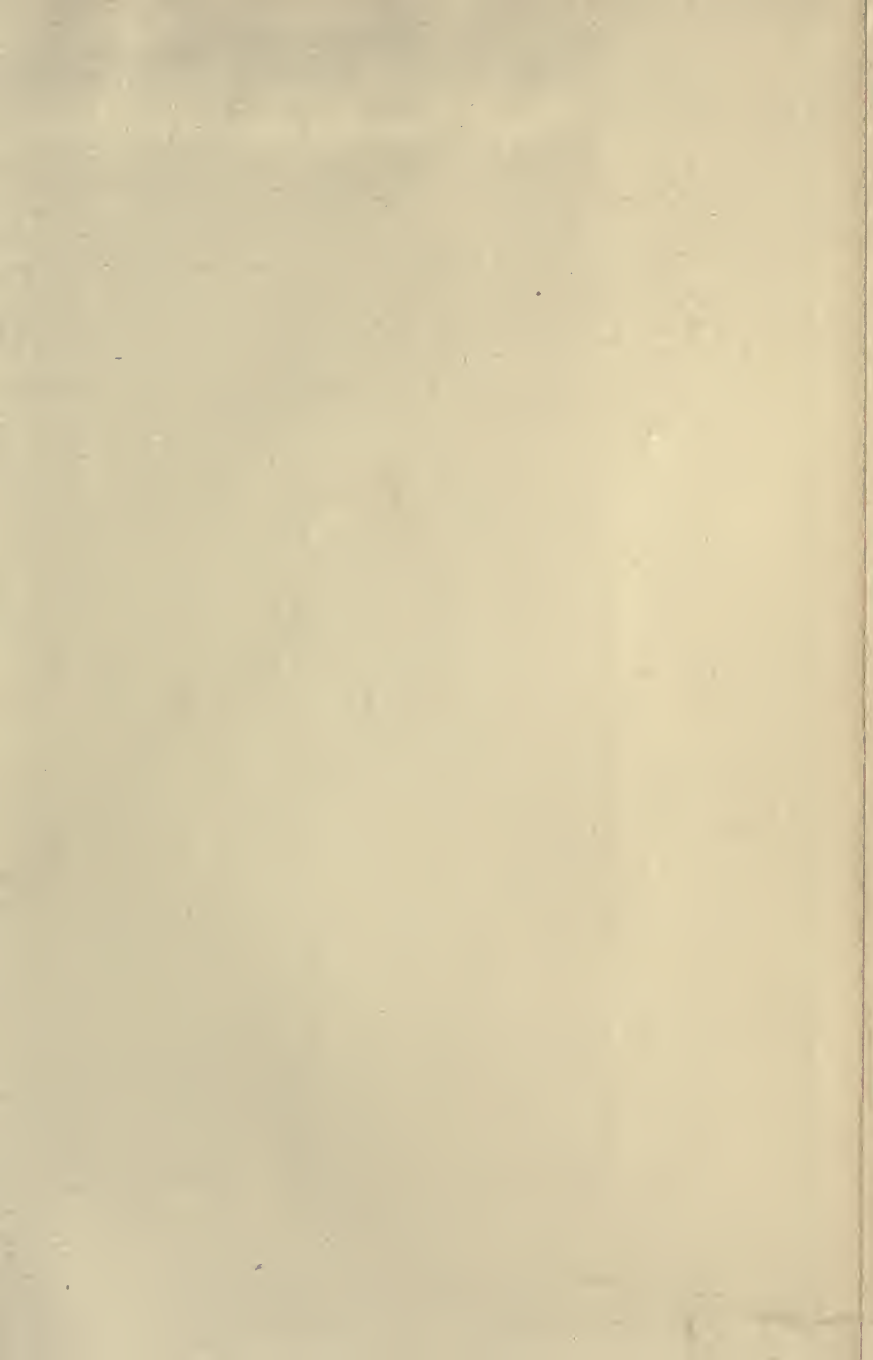
Together they kneel for a moment beside the little green mound and silently offer up a prayer for the spirit of the

dead man, and then turn slowly and make their way toward the gates of the churchyard.

As they reach the gates each turns and looks backward—a shaft of light from the setting sun throws a golden halo over the marble headstone of the dead man for an instant, and James murmurs, “May his soul rest in peace and God forgive him.”

As the last rays of rose and gold fade from view, they once more turn their faces toward home and—the future.

THE END.



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